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Preface

What is philosophy? There are probably as many answers to this question as there are philosophers, and this hardly encourages the average student to embark on a serious study of philosophy.

But although it may be difficult to provide a definition of philosophy that covers all its various facets, there is one thing all philosophers and all philosophical currents have in common: the desire to explain reality, the world that we live in. As Aristotle puts it, 'human beings by nature desire to philosophize.' For the ancient Greeks, who inaugurated Western philosophy, the term meant 'love of wisdom.' It is this love which motivated them to examine the mysteries of the natural world and of the human mind, and to lay the foundations for everything that followed.

The fundamental question for the Greeks was the question of change. Is change real or only apparent? And what is it that remains the same underneath the façade of change? These questions, along with practical considerations and political aspirations led the Pre-Socratics to create the first philosophical works of the Western tradition.

But they did not stop there. While trying to discover the one entity which underlies all the changes that we observe around us, they came up with the concept of universal principles which govern the world. Anaximander's *apeiron*, which can be translated as either unlimited or indefinite (and probably includes the meanings of both these English terms) was the first abstract notion intended to explicate reality as a whole. From the evolution of this simple concept to the elaborate metaphysical schemes of Plato and Aristotle it was a question of time.

The desire to explain the world is not unique to the Greeks. In fact, it is a common characteristic of mankind. What made the Greeks go beyond the magical and religious thought that characterized other civilizations, was a unique set of social and political circumstances, but also the fact that for the first time, with the emergence of democracy, it was

the best argument, rather than sheer force, which decided an issue. The Greek democracy provided a unique venue for the exchange of ideas, and it also made self-evident the importance of lucid and clear argumentation.

As Christianity gradually developed into the major spiritual force of the last part of antiquity, philosophy got incorporated into the theological teaching of the Catholic Church. For almost a millennium, philosophy became indistinguishable from theology. It is the giants of Christian thought, men like Augustine and Aquinas, who not only reinterpreted Greek thought, but also provided the link between this thought and modernity. Although the first indications of a trend towards the secularization of philosophy can be clearly traced in the thirteenth century, it would take Descartes' radical questioning of all authority, as well as the supersession of Aristotelian physics by Newton, for philosophy to become secular again. The question of whether human knowledge is innate or comes from experience, addressed by Plato and Aristotle, now comes once more to the fore and dominates Western thinking until Kant's synthesis of the two puts the matter to, at least a temporary, rest. At the same time, the social changes which follow the industrial revolution give rise to the treatises of thinkers like Hobbes and Locke. Both of these British philosophers attempt, in distinctly different ways, to express the aspirations of a rising industrial/commercial class, which will later be identified as the 'middle' class or the *bourgeoisie*. By the nineteenth century industrialization had proceeded enough for a new class to develop its own ideology and to challenge the worldview of the middle class, which had succeeded the medieval understanding of the world. The working class finds its aspirations expressed in the works of Marx and his epigones. But liberalism will remain politically dominant, and it will be invigorated by the works of John Stuart Mill. Mill also offers an alternative to the rigorous Kantian duty ethics. His utilitarianism, a refined version of a notion previously advanced by Bentham, is based on the idea that what is moral is what gives the greatest satisfaction to the greatest number of people. A post-Kantian duty ethics with strong emphasis on the concept of rights and Utilitarianism remain the two most influential moral theories in the West today.


There is another current of thought which appears in the nineteenth century and flourishes even further on the twentieth. The existentialists turn to philosophy not necessarily for an understanding of the world as a whole, but for personal non-religious salvation. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche pave the way for the thinking of Heidegger and Sartre. But with the end of the relative complacency which existed in Western Europe in previous decades and with the problems of globalization and the

conflict between recent civilizations becoming more acute in different years, traditional existentialism is not as dominant in academic circles as it used to be.

It is not possible, in an introductory course, to cover all aspects of Western philosophy. This book, and the course, follow a historical order and concentrate on some major thinkers and issues in its history. Metaphysics (ontology and epistemology) on the one hand, and ethics and politics on the other, are the two areas in which most emphasis is placed. With some exceptions, the texts selected for this volume are short. No memorization of any kind is expected from the students. It is rather the case that we will use these texts as a springboard to a better understanding of the world we live in and of the way the thinkers of the past understood it.

Western philosophy is a journey in history and in understanding. Let's enjoy it!





1. Introduction to the Pre-Socratics

Western philosophy, as we know it, begins with the Pre-Socratics. This term has come to designate a large number of philosophers, some of whom actually lived later than Socrates.

The Pre-Socratics initiate Western philosophy by doing, mainly, two things: (1) they move away from the 'magico-religious' explanations of the world which permeate Greek poetry (especially Homer and Hesiod) and they substitute religious thinking with rationalism; (2) for the first time in the history of our civilization, they try to explain the world as a whole, and they come up with the notion of the 'first principle' (*archē*), which is supposed to explain everything that there is. Ontology, a Greek term which means speech about being (*to on*), thus becomes for the first time possible.

Although the Pre-Socratics are a varied group of thinkers who cover the whole Greek world geographically and most of the sixth and fifth centuries BC chronologically, most of them share some fundamental characteristics:

1. They replace magico-religious explanation by rational thinking and argument.
2. They attempt to explain nature without reference to anything other than nature itself.
3. They attempt to produce a principle which will explain everything in the physical universe.
4. They are what we would today call 'scientists'—excellent astronomers, biologists and mathematicians.

Anaximander, in my opinion the first great Greek philosopher, was born in the Asia Minor city of Miletus and was probably the student of the distinguished astronomer and philosopher Thales. Thales thought of water as the principle out of which all things come, but Anaximander

reached a much higher level of abstraction by claiming that the first principle is the *apeiron*, the indefinite and limitless. The question of what he means with *apeiron* we will address in the class. But Anaximander also has a theory according to which in the world there is—or there should be—both cosmic and political balance. Cosmic balance is here used as an argument for the sharing of power between the traditional landed aristocracy of birth and a rising non-aristocratic farming and commercial class. Anaximander argues that the permanent domination of one element over another constitutes injustice: this is a thinly disguised attack on the monolithic control of the city-state by the aristocrats. His concept of justice as balance expresses the aspirations of the economically successful non-aristocrats who strive to be included in the political system.

In addition to Thales and Anaximander, the ranks of the Pre-Socratics include metaphysicians like Parmenides and Heraclitus, mathematicians like Pythagoras, and Democritus, who created a materialistic physics and an atomic theory remarkably similar in its fundamental concept to twentieth century AD atomic physics.

We have nothing that the Pre-Socratics wrote themselves. All our information comes from subsequent sources, sometimes writing a long time after them. Simplicius, who gives us Anaximander's famous fragment B12, and who is a very good source on the Pre-Socratics, writes in the sixth century AD, more than a thousand years after Anaximander's death!





Anaximander

doesn't imply formal relation

Anaximander, the son of Praxiades, was the student and successor of Thales. He claimed that the *apeiron* was the first principle and element of the things that are, and he was the first to give this name to the first principle. He claims that this principle is neither water nor any other of the so-called elements, but that it is some other kind of nature. This nature is indefinite/limitless (*apeiron*) and everything that exists in heavens and in all the worlds came from it. The things that are perish into the things that they came from, and this happens according to necessity, because they pay penalty and they offer retribution to each other for their injustice; and all this happens in accordance with the order of time, as he says in poetic language.

Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 24.13–21





2. Introduction to Socrates and Plato's *Apology*

Socrates is credited with turning philosophy's focus from metaphysics to ethics. He lived in Athens from 469 BC to 399 BC. In 399 BC he was indicted for corrupting the young and for not believing in the gods of Athens. He was convicted and executed.

Socrates never wrote anything, but he played a major part in the history of Western philosophy by asking some of the ethical and metaethical questions that his famous student, Plato, later addressed. Soon after his death many authors began writing 'Socratic dialogues', philosophical works with Socrates as the main speaker. It was Plato's dialogues, however, who decisively shaped the path of Western thought.

Socrates was brought to trial four years after Athens' defeat in the Peloponnesian War and the oligarchic coup which followed it. The junta of the so-called Thirty Tyrants lasted for only eight months, but led to the assassination of 1,500 citizens, a vast number given that the citizen population of Athens after the war was probably less than 20,000. Although Socrates never got involved in practical politics, he associated himself with Critias, the leader of the Thirty, and he was known to be critical of the democracy. Socrates argued, in particular, that in political issues it is expertise, not the opinion of the majority, that matters. In the political climate which followed the Thirty's downfall, what looked earlier as innocuous criticism became, to the Athenian democrats, a real danger to majority rule in Athens. The principal accuser of Socrates was Anytus, a leader of the democratic party, and, interestingly enough, by all accounts a moderate.

Socrates was essentially convicted because of his constant, even if implicit, criticisms of the democracy and because of his association with the Athenian aristocratic youth, one prominent member of which had betrayed the city twice during the Peloponnesian War (Alcibiades). By unceasingly questioning the ability of the many to make the right moral and political decisions, Socrates undercut the foundations of common

Greek morality. In a moment of crisis, the Athenians decided that they could not allow this kind of public behavior any longer.

Although Socrates' conviction is often described as an inexcusable crime against freedom of speech, it is actually better understood as a collision between a philosophical and individualistic theory and a conventional and community-based moral theory. This interpretation, which was for the first time offered by Hegel, catches well the essence of what happened in Athens in 399 BC.

Plato's *Apology* is written with the single-minded purpose of proving Socrates' innocence. It is also a rhetorical masterpiece. It is impossible for us to know how close it is to the actual speech that Socrates delivered in his trial, because it is certainly not a stenographic reproduction of that speech. What emerges most clearly from the *Apology* is Socrates' strict devotion to his principles. In another dialogue, the *Crito*, Plato describes how Socrates refused to escape from prison after his conviction, because if he did he would harm his city.





Apology

Plato

Translated by Benjamin Jowett

How you, O Athenians, have been affected by my accusers, I cannot tell; but I know that they almost made me forget who I was—so persuasively did they speak; and yet they have hardly uttered a word of truth. But of the many falsehoods told by them, there was one which quite amazed me;—I mean when they said that you should be upon your guard and not allow yourselves to be deceived by the force of my eloquence. To say this, when they were certain to be detected as soon as I opened my lips and proved myself to be anything but a great speaker, did indeed appear to me most shameless—unless by the force of eloquence they mean the force of truth; for is such is their meaning, I admit that I am eloquent. But in how different a way from theirs! Well, as I was saying, they have scarcely spoken the truth at all; but from me you shall hear the whole truth: not, however, delivered after their manner in a set oration duly ornamented with words and phrases. No, by heaven! but I shall use the words and arguments which occur to me at the moment; for I am confident in the justice of my cause (Or, I am certain that I am right in taking this course.): at my time of life I ought not to be appearing before you, O men of Athens, in the character of a juvenile orator—let no one expect it of me. And I must beg of you to grant me a favour:—If I defend myself in my accustomed manner, and you hear me using the words which I have been in the habit of using in the agora, at the tables of the money-changers, or anywhere else, I would ask you not to be surprised, and not to interrupt me on this account. For I am more than seventy years of age, and appearing now for the first time in a court of law, I am quite a stranger to the language of the place; and therefore I would have you regard me as if I were really a stranger, whom you would excuse if he spoke in his native tongue, and after the fashion of his country:—Am I making an unfair request of you? Never mind the manner, which may or may not be good; but think only of the truth of my words, and give heed to that: let the speaker speak truly and the judge decide justly.

And first, I have to reply to the older charges and to my first accusers, and then I will go on to the later ones. For of old I have had many accusers, who have accused me falsely to you during many years; and I am more afraid of them than of Anytus and his associates, who are dangerous, too, in their own way. But far more dangerous are the others, who began when you were children, and took possession of your minds with their falsehoods,

telling of one Socrates, a wise man, who speculated about the heaven above, and searched into the earth beneath, and made the worse appear the better cause. The disseminators of this tale are the accusers whom I dread; for their hearers are apt to fancy that such enquirers do not believe in the existence of the gods. And they are many, and their charges against me are of ancient date, and they were made by them in the days when you were more impressible than you are now—in childhood, or it may have been in youth—and the cause when heard went by default, for there was none to answer. And hardest of all, I do not know and cannot tell the names of my accusers; unless in the chance case of a Comic poet. All who from envy and malice have persuaded you—some of them having first convinced themselves—all this class of men are most difficult to deal with; for I cannot have them up here, and cross-examine them, and therefore I must simply fight with shadows in my own defence, and argue when there is no one who answers. I will ask you then to assume with me, as I was saying, that my opponents are of two kinds; one recent, the other ancient: and I hope that you will see the propriety of my answering the latter first, for these accusations you heard long before the others, and much oftener.

Well, then, I must make my defence, and endeavour to clear away in a short time, a slander which has lasted a long time. May I succeed, if to succeed be for my good and yours, or likely to avail me in my cause! The task is not an easy one; I quite understand the nature of it. And so leaving the event with God, in obedience to the law I will now make my defence.

I will begin at the beginning, and ask what is the accusation which has given rise to the slander of me, and in fact has encouraged Meletus to proof this charge against me. Well, what do the slanderers say? They shall be my prosecutors, and I will sum up their words in an affidavit: 'Socrates is an evil-doer, and a curious person, who searches into things under the earth and in heaven, and he makes the worse appear the better cause; and he teaches the aforesaid doctrines to others'. Such is the nature of the accusation: it is just what you have yourselves seen in the comedy of Aristophanes (Aristoph., *Clouds.*), who has introduced a man whom he calls Socrates, going about and saying that he walks in air, and talking a deal of nonsense concerning matters of which I do not pretend to know either much or little—not that I mean to speak disparagingly of any one who is a student of natural philosophy. I should be very sorry if Meletus could bring so grave a charge against me. But the simple truth is, O Athenians, that I have nothing to do with physical speculations. Very many of those here present are witnesses to the truth of this, and to them I appeal. Speak then, you who have heard me, and tell your neighbours whether any of you have ever known me hold forth in few words or in many upon such matters. You hear their answer. And from what they say of this part of the charge you will be able to judge of the truth of the rest.

As little foundation is there for the report that I am a teacher, and take money; this accusation has no more truth in it than the other. Although, if a man were really able to instruct mankind, to receive money for giving instruction would, in my opinion, be an honour to him. There is Gorgias of Leontium, and Prodicus of Ceos, and Hippias of Elis, who go the round of the cities, and are able to persuade the young men to leave their own citizens



by whom they might be taught for nothing, and come to them whom they not only pay, but are thankful if they may be allowed to pay them. There is at this time a Parian philosopher residing in Athens, of whom I have heard; and I came to hear of him in this way:—I came across a man who has spent a world of money on the Sophists, Callias, the son of Hipponicus, and knowing that he had sons, I asked him: ‘Callias’, I said, ‘if your two sons were foals or calves, there would be no difficulty in finding some one to put over them; we should hire a trainer of horses, or a farmer probably, who would improve and perfect them in their own proper virtue and excellence; but as they are human beings, whom are you thinking of placing over them? Is there any one who understands human and political virtue? You must have thought about the matter, for you have sons; is there any one?’ ‘There is’, he said. ‘Who is he?’ said I; ‘and of what country? and what does he charge?’ ‘Evenus the Parian’, he replied; ‘he is the man, and his charge is five minae.’ Happy is Evenus, I said to myself, if he really has this wisdom, and teaches at such a moderate charge. Had I the same, I should have been very proud and conceited; but the truth is that I have no knowledge of the kind.

I dare say, Athenians, that some one among you will reply, ‘Yes, Socrates, but what is the origin of these accusations which are brought against you; there must have been something strange which you have been doing? All these rumours and this talk about you would never have arisen if you had been like other men: tell us, then, what is the cause of them, for we should be sorry to judge hastily of you.’ Now I regard this as a fair challenge, and I will endeavour to explain to you the reason why I am called wise and have such an evil fame. Please to attend then. And although some of you may think that I am joking, I declare that I will tell you the entire truth. Men of Athens, this reputation of mine has come of a certain sort of wisdom which I possess. If you ask me what kind of wisdom, I reply, wisdom such as may perhaps be attained by man, for to that extent I am inclined to believe that I am wise; whereas the persons of whom I was speaking have a superhuman wisdom which I may fail to describe, because I have it not myself; and he who says that I have, speaks falsely, and is taking away my character. And here, O men of Athens, I must beg you not to interrupt me, even if I seem to say something extravagant. For the word which I will speak is not mine. I will refer you to a witness who is worthy of credit; that witness shall be the God of Delphi—he will tell you about my wisdom, if I have any, and of what sort it is. You must have known Chaerephon; he was early a friend of mine, and also a friend of yours, for he shared in the recent exile of the people, and returned with you. Well, Chaerephon, as you know, was very impetuous in all his doings, and he went to Delphi and boldly asked the oracle to tell him whether—as I was saying, I must beg you not to interrupt—he asked the oracle to tell him whether anyone was wiser than I was, and the Pythian prophetess answered, that there was no man wiser. Chaerephon is dead himself; but his brother, who is in court, will confirm the truth of what I am saying.

Why do I mention this? Because I am going to explain to you why I have such an evil name. When I heard the answer, I said to myself, What can the god mean? and what is the interpretation of his riddle? for I know that I have no wisdom, small or great. What then can he mean when he says that I am the wisest of men? And yet he is a god, and cannot lie;



that would be against his nature. After long consideration, I thought of a method of trying the question. I reflected that if I could only find a man wiser than myself, then I might go to the god with a refutation in my hand. I should say to him, 'Here is a man who is wiser than I am; but you said that I was the wisest.' Accordingly I went to one who had the reputation of wisdom, and observed him—his name I need not mention; he was a politician whom I selected for examination—and the result was as follows: When I began to talk with him, I could not help thinking that he was not really wise, although he was thought wise by many, and still wiser by himself; and thereupon I tried to explain to him that he thought himself wise, but was not really wise; and the consequence was that he hated me, and his enmity was shared by several who were present and heard me. So I left him, saying to myself, as I went away: Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good, I am better off than he is,—for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows; I neither know nor think that I know. In this latter particular, then, I seem to have slightly the advantage of him. Then I went to another who had still higher pretensions to wisdom, and my conclusion was exactly the same. Whereupon I made another enemy of him, and of many others besides him.

Then I went to one man after another, being not unconscious of the enmity which I provoked, and I lamented and feared this: but necessity was laid upon me,—the word of God, I thought, ought to be considered first. And I said to myself, Go I must to all who appear to know, and find out the meaning of the oracle. And I swear to you, Athenians, by the dog I swear!—for I must tell you the truth—the result of my mission was just this: I found that the men most in repute were all but the most foolish; and that others less esteemed were really wiser and better. I will tell you the tale of my wanderings and of the 'Herculean' labours, as I may call them, which I endured only to find at last the oracle irrefutable. After the politicians, I went to the poets; tragic, dithyrambic, and all sorts. And there, I said to myself, you will be instantly detected; now you will find out that you are more ignorant than they are. Accordingly, I took them some of the most elaborate passages in their own writings, and asked what was the meaning of them—thinking that they would teach me something. Will you believe me? I am almost ashamed to confess the truth, but I must say that there is hardly a person present who would not have talked better about their poetry than they did themselves. Then I knew that not by wisdom do poets write poetry, but by a sort of genius and inspiration; they are like diviners or soothsayers who also say many fine things, but do not understand the meaning of them. The poets appeared to me to be much in the same case; and I further observed that upon the strength of their poetry they believed themselves to be the wisest of men in other things in which they were not wise. So I departed, conceiving myself to be superior to them for the same reason that I was superior to the politicians.

At last I went to the artisans. I was conscious that I knew nothing at all, as I may say, and I was sure that they knew many fine things; and here I was not mistaken, for they did know many things of which I was ignorant, and in this they certainly were wiser than I was. But I observed that even the good artisans fell into the same error as the poets;—because



they were good workmen they thought that they also knew all sorts of high matters, and this defect in them overshadowed their wisdom; and therefore I asked myself on behalf of the oracle, whether I would like to be as I was, neither having their knowledge nor their ignorance, or like them in both; and I made answer to myself and to the oracle that I was better off as I was.

This inquisition has led to my having many enemies of the worst and most dangerous kind, and has given occasion also to many calumnies. And I am called wise, for my hearers always imagine that I myself possess the wisdom which I find wanting in others: but the truth is, O men of Athens, that God only is wise; and by his answer he intends to show that the wisdom of men is worth little or nothing; he is not speaking of Socrates, he is only using my name by way of illustration, as if he said, He, O men, is the wisest, who, like Socrates, knows that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing. And so I go about the world, obedient to the god, and search and make enquiry into the wisdom of any one, whether citizen or stranger, who appears to be wise; and if he is not wise, then in vindication of the oracle I show him that he is not wise; and my occupation quite absorbs me, and I have no time to give either to any public matter of interest or to any concern of my own, but I am in utter poverty by reason of my devotion to the god.

There is another thing:—young men of the richer classes, who have not much to do, come about me of their own accord; they like to hear the pretenders examined, and they often imitate me, and proceed to examine others; there are plenty of persons, as they quickly discover, who think that they know something, but really know little or nothing; and then those who are examined by them instead of being angry with themselves are angry with me: This confounded Socrates, they say; this villainous misleader of youth!—and then if somebody asks them, Why, what evil does he practise or teach? they do not know, and cannot tell; but in order that they may not appear to be at a loss, they repeat the ready-made charges which are used against all philosophers about teaching things up in the clouds and under the earth, and having no gods, and making the worse appear the better cause; for they do not like to confess that their pretence of knowledge has been detected—which is the truth; and as they are numerous and ambitious and energetic, and are drawn up in battle array and have persuasive tongues, they have filled your ears with their loud and inveterate calumnies. And this is the reason why my three accusers, Meletus and Anytus and Lycon, have set upon me; Meletus, who has a quarrel with me on behalf of the poets; Anytus, on behalf of the craftsmen and politicians; Lycon, on behalf of the rhetoricians: and as I said at the beginning, I cannot expect to get rid of such a mass of calumny all in a moment. And this, O men of Athens, is the truth and the whole truth; I have concealed nothing, I have dissembled nothing. And yet, I know that my plainness of speech makes them hate me, and what is their hatred but a proof that I am speaking the truth?—Hence has arisen the prejudice against me; and this is the reason of it, as you will find out either in this or in any future enquiry.

I have said enough in my defence against the first class of my accusers; I turn to the second class. They are headed by Meletus, that good man and true lover of his country, as



he calls himself. Against these, too, I must try to make a defence:—Let their affidavit be read: it contains something of this kind: It says that Socrates is a doer of evil, who corrupts the youth; and who does not believe in the gods of the state, but has other new divinities of his own. Such is the charge; and now let us examine the particular counts. [He says that I am a doer of evil, and corrupt the youth; but I say, O men of Athens, that Meletus is a doer of evil, in that he pretends to be in earnest when he is only in jest, and is so eager to bring men to trial from a pretended zeal and interest about matters in which he really never had the smallest interest. And the truth of this I will endeavour to prove to you.

Come hither, Meletus, and let me ask a question of you. You think a great deal about the improvement of youth?

Yes, I do.

Tell the judges, then, who is their improver; for you must know, as you have taken the pains to discover their corrupter, and are citing and accusing me before them. Speak, then, and tell the judges who their improver is.—Observe, Meletus, that you are silent, and have nothing to say. But is not this rather disgraceful, and a very considerable proof of what I was saying, that you have no interest in the matter? Speak up, friend, and tell us who their improver is.

The laws.

But that, my good sir, is not my meaning. I want to know who the person is, who, in the first place, knows the laws.

The judges, Socrates, who are present in court.

What, do you mean to say, Meletus, that they are able to instruct and improve youth?

Certainly they are.

What, all of them, or some only and not others?

All of them.

² [By the goddess Hera, that is good news! There are plenty of improvers, then. And what do you say of the audience,—do they improve them?

Yes, they do.

And the senators?

Yes, the senators improve them.

But perhaps the members of the assembly corrupt them?—or do they too improve them?

They improve them.

Then every Athenian improves and elevates them; all with the exception of myself; and I alone am their corrupter? Is that what you affirm?

That is what I stoutly affirm.

I am very unfortunate if you are right. But suppose I ask you a question: How about horses? Does one man do them harm and all the world good? Is not the exact opposite the truth? One man is able to do them good, or at least not many;—the trainer of horses, that is to say, does them good, and others who have to do with them rather injure them? Is not that true, Meletus, of horses, or of any other animals? Most assuredly it is; whether you and Anytus say yes or no. Happy indeed would be the condition of youth if they had one



corrupter only, and all the rest of the world were their improvers. But you, Meletus, have sufficiently shown that you never had a thought about the young: your carelessness is seen in your not caring about the very things which you bring against me.]

3 [And now, Meletus, I will ask you another question—by Zeus I will: Which is better, to live among bad citizens, or among good ones? Answer, friend, I say; the question is one which may be easily answered. Do not the good do their neighbours good, and the bad do them evil?

Certainly.

And is there anyone who would rather be injured than benefited by those who live with him? Answer, my good friend, the law requires you to answer—does any one like to be injured?

Certainly not.

And when you accuse me of corrupting and deteriorating the youth, do you allege that I corrupt them intentionally or unintentionally?

Intentionally, I say.

But you have just admitted that the good do their neighbours good, and the evil do them evil. Now, is that a truth which your superior wisdom has recognized thus early in life, and am I, at my age, in such darkness and ignorance as not to know that if a man with whom I have to live is corrupted by me, I am very likely to be harmed by him; and yet I corrupt him, and intentionally, too—so you say, although neither I nor any other human being is ever likely to be convinced by you. But either I do not corrupt them, or I corrupt them unintentionally; and on either view of the case you lie. If my offence is unintentional, the law has no cognizance of unintentional offences: you ought to have taken me privately, and warned and admonished me; for if I had been better advised, I should have left off doing what I only did unintentionally—no doubt I should; but you would have nothing to say to me and refused to teach me. And now you bring me up in this court, which is a place not of instruction, but of punishment.]

It will be very clear to you, Athenians, as I was saying, that Meletus has no care at all, great or small, about the matter. But still I should like to know, Meletus, in what I am affirmed to corrupt the young. I suppose you mean, as I infer from your indictment, that I teach them not to acknowledge the gods which the state acknowledges, but some other new divinities or spiritual agencies in their stead. These are the lessons by which I corrupt the youth, as you say.

Yes, that I say emphatically.

Then, by the gods, Meletus, of whom we are speaking, tell me and the court, in somewhat plainer terms, what you mean! for I do not as yet understand whether you affirm that I teach other men to acknowledge some gods, and therefore that I do believe in gods, and am not an entire atheist—this you do not lay to my charge,—but only you say that they are not the same gods which the city recognizes—the charge is that they are different gods. Or, do you mean that I am an atheist simply, and a teacher of atheism?

I mean the latter—that you are a complete atheist.



What an extraordinary statement! Why do you think so, Meletus? Do you mean that I do not believe in the godhead of the sun or moon, like other men?

I assure you, judges, that he does not: for he says that the sun is stone, and the moon earth.

Friend Meletus, you think that you are accusing Anaxagoras: and you have but a bad opinion of the judges, if you fancy them illiterate to such a degree as not to know that these doctrines are found in the books of Anaxagoras the Clazomenian, which are full of them. And so, forsooth, the youth are said to be taught them by Socrates, when there are not unfrequently exhibitions of them at the theatre (Probably in allusion to Aristophanes who caricatured, and to Euripides who borrowed the notions of Anaxagoras, as well as to other dramatic poets.) (price of admission one drachma at the most); and they might pay their money, and laugh at Socrates if he pretends to father these extraordinary views. And so, Meletus, you really think that I do not believe in any god?

I swear by Zeus that you believe absolutely in none at all.

Nobody will believe you, Meletus, and I am pretty sure that you do not believe yourself. I cannot help thinking, men of Athens, that Meletus is reckless and impudent, and that he has written this indictment in a spirit of mere wantonness and youthful bravado. Has he not compounded a riddle, thinking to try me? He said to himself:—I shall see whether the wise Socrates will discover my facetious contradiction, or whether I shall be able to deceive him and the rest of them. For he certainly does appear to me to contradict himself in the indictment as much as if he said that Socrates is guilty of not believing in the gods, and yet of believing in them—but this is not like a person who is in earnest.

⁴ [I should like you, O men of Athens, to join me in examining what I conceive to be his inconsistency; and do you, Meletus, answer. And I must remind the audience of my request that they would not make a disturbance if I speak in my accustomed manner:

Did ever man, Meletus, believe in the existence of human things, and not of human beings? I wish, men of Athens, that he would answer, and not be always trying to get up an interruption. Did ever any man believe in horsemanship, and not in horses? or in flute-playing, and not in flute-players? No, my friend; I will answer to you and to the court, as you refuse to answer for yourself. There is no man who ever did. But now please to answer the next question: Can a man believe in spiritual and divine agencies, and not in spirits or demigods?

He cannot.

How lucky I am to have extracted that answer, by the assistance of the court! But then you swear in the indictment that I teach and believe in divine or spiritual agencies (new or old, no matter for that); at any rate, I believe in spiritual agencies,—so you say and swear in the affidavit; and yet if I believe in divine beings, how can I help believing in spirits or demigods;—must I not? To be sure I must; and therefore I may assume that your silence gives consent. Now what are spirits or demigods? Are they not either gods or the sons of gods?

Certainly they are.



But this is what I call the facetious riddle invented by you: the demigods or spirits are gods, and you say first that I do not believe in gods, and then again that I do believe in gods; that is, if I believe in demigods. For if the demigods are the illegitimate sons of gods, whether by the nymphs or by any other mothers, of whom they are said to be the sons—what human being will ever believe that there are no gods if they are the sons of gods? You might as well affirm the existence of mules, and deny that of horses and asses. Such nonsense, Meletus, could only have been intended by you to make trial of me. You have put this into the indictment because you had nothing real of which to accuse me. But no one who has a particle of understanding will ever be convinced by you that the same men can believe in divine and superhuman things, and yet not believe that there are gods and demigods and heroes.]

I have said enough in answer to the charge of Meletus: any elaborate defence is unnecessary, but I know only too well how many are the enmities which I have incurred, and this is what will be my destruction if I am destroyed;—not Meletus, nor yet Anytus, but the envy and detraction of the world, which has been the death of many good men, and will probably be the death of many more; there is no danger of my being the last of them.

5[Some one will say: And are you not ashamed, Socrates, of a course of life which is likely to bring you to an untimely end? To him I may fairly answer: There you are mistaken: a man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether in doing anything he is doing right or wrong—acting the part of a good man or of a bad. Whereas, upon your view, the heroes who fell at Troy were not good for much, and the son of Thetis above all, who altogether despised danger in comparison with disgrace; and when he was so eager to slay Hector, his goddess mother said to him, that if he avenged his companion Patroclus, and slew Hector, he would die himself—‘Fate’, she said, in these or the like words, ‘waits for you next after Hector;’ he, receiving this warning, utterly despised danger and death, and instead of fearing them, feared rather to live in dishonour, and not to avenge his friend. ‘Let me die forthwith’, he replies, ‘and be avenged of my enemy, rather than abide here by the beaked ships, a laughing-stock and a burden of the earth.’ Had Achilles any thought of death and danger? For wherever a man’s place is, whether the place which he has chosen or that in which he has been placed by a commander, there he ought to remain in the hour of danger; he should not think of death or of anything but of disgrace. And this, O men of Athens, is a true saying.]

Strange, indeed, would be my conduct, O men of Athens, if I who, when I was ordered by the generals whom you chose to command me at Potidaea and Amphipolis and Delium, remained where they placed me, like any other man, facing death—if now, when, as I conceive and imagine, God orders me to fulfil the philosopher’s mission of searching into myself and other men, I were to desert my post through fear of death, or any other fear; that would indeed be strange, and I might justly be arraigned in court for denying the existence of the gods, if I disobeyed the oracle because I was afraid of death, fancying that I was wise when I was not wise. For the fear of death is indeed the pretence of wisdom, and not real wisdom, being a pretence of knowing the unknown; and no one knows whether death,



which men in their fear apprehend to be the greatest evil, may not be the greatest good. Is not this ignorance of a disgraceful sort, the ignorance which is the conceit that a man knows what he does not know? And in this respect only I believe myself to differ from men in general, and may perhaps claim to be wiser than they are:—that whereas I know but little of the world below, I do not suppose that I know: but I do know that injustice and disobedience to a better, whether God or man, is evil and dishonourable, and I will never fear or avoid a possible good rather than a certain evil. And therefore if you let me go now, and are not convinced by Anytus, who said that since I had been prosecuted I must be put to death; (or if not that I ought never to have been prosecuted at all); and that if I escape now, your sons will all be utterly ruined by listening to my words—if you say to me, Socrates, this time we will not mind Anytus, and you shall be let off, but upon one condition, that you are not to enquire and speculate in this way any more, and that if you are caught doing so again you shall die;—if this was the condition on which you let me go, I should reply: Men of Athens, I honour and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting any one whom I meet and saying to him after my manner: You, my friend,—a citizen of the great and mighty and wise city of Athens,—are you not ashamed of heaping up the greatest amount of money and honour and reputation, and caring so little about wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul, which you never regard or heed at all? And if the person with whom I am arguing, says: Yes, but I do care; then I do not leave him or let him go at once; but I proceed to interrogate and examine and cross-examine him, and if I think that he has no virtue in him, but only says that he has, I reproach him with undervaluing the greater, and overvaluing the less. And I shall repeat the same words to every one whom I meet, young and old, citizen and alien, but especially to the citizens, inasmuch as they are my brethren. For know that this is the command of God; and I believe that no greater good has ever happened in the state than my service to the God. For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons or your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul. I tell you that virtue is not given by money, but that from virtue comes money and every other good of man, public as well as private. This is my teaching, and if this is the doctrine which corrupts the youth, I am a mischievous person. But if any one says that this is not my teaching, he is speaking an untruth. Wherefore, O men of Athens, I say to you, do as Anytus bids or not as Anytus bids, and either acquit me or not; but whichever you do, understand that I shall never alter my ways, not even if I have to die many times.

Men of Athens, do not interrupt, but hear me; there was an understanding between us that you should hear me to the end: I have something more to say, at which you may be inclined to cry out; but I believe that to hear me will be good for you, and therefore I beg that you will not cry out. I would have you know, that if you kill such an one as I am, you will injure yourselves more than you will injure me. Nothing will injure me, not Meletus nor yet Anytus—they cannot, for a bad man is not permitted to injure a better than himself. I do not deny that Anytus may, perhaps, kill him, or drive him into exile, or deprive him of



civil rights; and he may imagine, and others may imagine, that he is inflicting a great injury upon him: but there I do not agree. For the evil of doing as he is doing—the evil of unjustly taking away the life of another—is greater far.

And now, Athenians, I am not going to argue for my own sake, as you may think, but for yours, that you may not sin against the God by condemning me, who am his gift to you. For if you kill me you will not easily find a successor to me, who, if I may use such a ludicrous figure of speech, am a sort of gadfly, given to the state by God; and the state is a great and noble steed who is tardy in his motions owing to his very size, and requires to be stirred into life. I am that gadfly which God has attached to the state, and all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you. You will not easily find another like me, and therefore I would advise you to spare me. I dare say that you may feel out of temper (like a person who is suddenly awakened from sleep), and you think that you might easily strike me dead as Anytus advises, and then you would sleep on for the remainder of your lives, unless God in his care of you sent you another gadfly. When I say that I am given to you by God, the proof of my mission is this:—if I had been like other men, I should not have neglected all my own concerns or patiently seen the neglect of them during all these years, and have been doing yours, coming to you individually like a father or elder brother, exhorting you to regard virtue; such conduct, I say, would be unlike human nature. If I had gained anything, or if my exhortations had been paid, there would have been some sense in my doing so; but now, as you will perceive, not even the impudence of my accusers dares to say that I have ever exacted or sought pay of any one; of that they have no witness. And I have a sufficient witness to the truth of what I say—my poverty.

Some one may wonder why I go about in private giving advice and busying myself with the concerns of others, but do not venture to come forward in public and advise the state. I will tell you why. You have heard me speak at sundry times and in divers places of an oracle or sign which comes to me, and is the divinity which Meletus ridicules in the indictment. This sign, which is a kind of voice, first began to come to me when I was a child; it always forbids but never commands me to do anything which I am going to do. This is what deters me from being a politician. And rightly, as I think. For I am certain, O men of Athens, that if I had engaged in politics, I should have perished long ago, and done no good either to you or to myself. And do not be offended at my telling you the truth: for the truth is, that no man who goes to war with you or any other multitude, honestly striving against the many lawless and unrighteous deeds which are done in a state, will save his life; he who will fight for the right, if he would live even for a brief space, must have a private station and not a public one.

I can give you convincing evidence of what I say, not words only, but what you value far more—actions. Let me relate to you a passage of my own life which will prove to you that I should never have yielded to injustice from any fear of death, and that ‘as I should have refused to yield’ I must have died at once. I will tell you a tale of the courts, not very interesting perhaps, but nevertheless true. The only office of state which I ever held, O men



of Athens, was that of senator: the tribe Antiochis, which is my tribe, had the presidency at the trial of the generals who had not taken up the bodies of the slain after the battle of Arginusae; and you proposed to try them in a body, contrary to law, as you all thought afterwards; but at the time I was the only one of the Prytanes who was opposed to the illegality, and I gave my vote against you; and when the orators threatened to impeach and arrest me, and you called and shouted, I made up my mind that I would run the risk, having law and justice with me, rather than take part in your injustice because I feared imprisonment and death. This happened in the days of the democracy. But when the oligarchy of the Thirty was in power, they sent for me and four others into the rotunda, and bade us bring Leon the Salaminian from Salamis, as they wanted to put him to death. This was a specimen of the sort of commands which they were always giving with the view of implicating as many as possible in their crimes; and then I showed, not in word only but in deed, that, if I may be allowed to use such an expression, I cared not a straw for death, and that my great and only care was lest I should do an unrighteous or unholy thing. For the strong arm of that oppressive power did not frighten me into doing wrong; and when we came out of the rotunda the other four went to Salamis and fetched Leon, but I went quietly home. For which I might have lost my life, had not the power of the Thirty shortly afterwards come to an end. And many will witness to my words.

Now do you really imagine that I could have survived all these years, if I had led a public life, supposing that like a good man I had always maintained the right and had made justice, as I ought, the first thing? No indeed, men of Athens, neither I nor any other man. But I have been always the same in all my actions, public as well as private, and never have I yielded any base compliance to those who are slanderously termed my disciples, or to any other. Not that I have any regular disciples. But if any one likes to come and hear me while I am pursuing my mission, whether he be young or old, he is not excluded. Nor do I converse only with those who pay; but any one, whether he be rich or poor, may ask and answer me and listen to my words; and whether he turns out to be a bad man or a good one, neither result can be justly imputed to me; for I never taught or professed to teach him anything. And if any one says that he has ever learned or heard anything from me in private which all the world has not heard, let me tell you that he is lying.

But I shall be asked, Why do people delight in continually conversing with you? I have told you already, Athenians, the whole truth about this matter: they like to hear the cross-examination of the pretenders to wisdom; there is amusement in it. Now this duty of cross-examining other men has been imposed upon me by God; and has been signified to me by oracles, visions, and in every way in which the will of divine power was ever intimated to any one. This is true, O Athenians, or, if not true, would be soon refuted. If I am or have been corrupting the youth, those of them who are now grown up and have become sensible that I gave them bad advice in the days of their youth should come forward as accusers, and take their revenge; or if they do not like to come themselves, some of their relatives, fathers, brothers, or other kinsmen, should say what evil their families have suffered at my hands. Now is their time. Many of them I see in the court. There is Crito, who



is of the same age and of the same deme with myself, and there is Critobulus his son, whom I also see. Then again there is Lysanias of Sphettus, who is the father of Aeschines—he is present; and also there is Antiphon of Cephissus, who is the father of Epigenes; and there are the brothers of several who have associated with me. There is Nicostratus the son of Theosdotides, and the brother of Theodotus (now Theodotus himself is dead, and therefore he, at any rate, will not seek to stop him); and there is Paralus the son of Demodocus, who had a brother Theages; and Adeimantus the son of Ariston, whose brother Plato is present; and Aeantodorus, who is the brother of Apollodorus, whom I also see. I might mention a great many others, some of whom Meletus should have produced as witnesses in the course of his speech; and let him still produce them, if he has forgotten—I will make way for him. And let him say, if he has any testimony of the sort which he can produce. Nay, Athenians, the very opposite is the truth. For all these are ready to witness on behalf of the corrupter, of the injurer of their kindred, as Meletus and Anytus call me; not the corrupted youth only—there might have been a motive for that—but their uncorrupted elder relatives. Why should they too support me with their testimony? Why, indeed, except for the sake of truth and justice, and because they know that I am speaking the truth, and that Meletus is a liar.

Well, Athenians, this and the like of this is all the defence which I have to offer. Yet a word more. Perhaps there may be some one who is offended at me, when he calls to mind how he himself on a similar, or even a less serious occasion, prayed and entreated the judges with many tears, and how he produced his children in court, which was a moving spectacle, together with a host of relations and friends; whereas I, who am probably in danger of my life, will do none of these things. The contrast may occur to his mind, and he may be set against me, and vote in anger because he is displeased at me on this account. Now if there be such a person among you,—mind, I do not say that there is,—to him I may fairly reply: My friend, I am a man, and like other men, a creature of flesh and blood, and not ‘of wood or stone’, as Homer says; and I have a family, yes, and sons, O Athenians, three in number, one almost a man, and two others who are still young; and yet I will not bring any of them hither in order to petition you for an acquittal. And why not? Not from any self-assertion or want of respect for you. Whether I am or am not afraid of death is another question, of which I will not now speak. But, having regard to public opinion, I feel that such conduct would be discreditable to myself, and to you, and to the whole state. One who has reached my years, and who has a name for wisdom, ought not to demean himself. Whether this opinion of me be deserved or not, at any rate the world has decided that Socrates is in some way superior to other men. And if those among you who are said to be superior in wisdom and courage, and any other virtue, demean themselves in this way, how shameful is their conduct! I have seen men of reputation, when they have been condemned, behaving in the strangest manner: they seemed to fancy that they were going to suffer something dreadful if they died, and that they could be immortal if you only allowed them to live; and I think that such are a dishonour to the state, and that any stranger coming in would have said of them that the most eminent men of Athens, to whom the Athenians themselves give honour and command, are no better than women. And I say that these things ought not to be done by those



of us who have a reputation; and if they are done, you ought not to permit them; you ought rather to show that you are far more disposed to condemn the man who gets up a doleful scene and makes the city ridiculous, than him who holds his peace.

But, setting aside the question of public opinion, there seems to be something wrong in asking a favour of a judge, and thus procuring an acquittal, instead of informing and convincing him. For his duty is, not to make a present of justice, but to give judgment; and he has sworn that he will judge according to the laws, and not according to his own good pleasure; and we ought not to encourage you, nor should you allow yourselves to be encouraged, in this habit of perjury—there can be no piety in that. Do not then require me to do what I consider dishonourable and impious and wrong, especially now, when I am being tried for impiety on the indictment of Meletus. For if, O men of Athens, by force of persuasion and entreaty I could overpower your oaths, then I should be teaching you to believe that there are no gods, and in defending should simply convict myself of the charge of not believing in them. But that is not so—far otherwise. For I do believe that there are gods, and in a sense higher than that in which any of my accusers believe in them. And to you and to God I commit my cause, to be determined by you as is best for you and me.

There are many reasons why I am not grieved, O men of Athens, at the vote of condemnation. I expected it, and am only surprised that the votes are so nearly equal; for I had thought that the majority against me would have been far larger; but now, had thirty votes gone over to the other side, I should have been acquitted. And I may say, I think, that I have escaped Meletus. I may say more; for without the assistance of Anytus and Lycon, any one may see that he would not have had a fifth part of the votes, as the law requires, in which case he would have incurred a fine of a thousand drachmae.

And so he proposes death as the penalty. And what shall I propose on my part, O men of Athens? Clearly that which is my due. And what is my due? What return shall be made to the man who has never had the wit to be idle during his whole life; but has been careless of what the many care for—wealth, and family interests, and military offices, and speaking in the assembly, and magistracies, and plots, and parties. Reflecting that I was really too honest a man to be a politician and live, I did not go where I could do no good to you or to myself; but where I could do the greatest good privately to every one of you, thither I went, and sought to persuade every man among you that he must look to himself, and seek virtue and wisdom before he looks to his private interests, and look to the state before he looks to the interests of the state; and that this should be the order which he observes in all his actions. What shall be done to such an one? Doubtless some good thing, O men of Athens, if he has his reward; and the good should be of a kind suitable to him. What would be a reward suitable to a poor man who is your benefactor, and who desires leisure that he may instruct you? There can be no reward so fitting as maintenance in the Prytaneum, O men of Athens, a reward which he deserves far more than the citizen who has won the prize at



Olympia in the horse or chariot race, whether the chariots were drawn by two horses or by many. For I am in want, and he has enough; and he only gives you the appearance of happiness, and I give you the reality. And if I am to estimate the penalty fairly, I should say that maintenance in the Prytaneum is the just return.

Perhaps you think that I am braving you in what I am saying now, as in what I said before about the tears and prayers. But this is not so. I speak rather because I am convinced that I never intentionally wronged any one, although I cannot convince you—the time has been too short; if there were a law at Athens, as there is in other cities, that a capital cause should not be decided in one day, then I believe that I should have convinced you. But I cannot in a moment refute great slanders; and, as I am convinced that I never wronged another, I will assuredly not wrong myself. I will not say of myself that I deserve any evil, or propose any penalty. Why should I? because I am afraid of the penalty of death which Meletus proposes? When I do not know whether death is a good or an evil, why should I propose a penalty which would certainly be an evil? Shall I say imprisonment? And why should I live in prison, and be the slave of the magistrates of the year—of the Eleven? Or shall the penalty be a fine, and imprisonment until the fine is paid? There is the same objection. I should have to lie in prison, for money I have none, and cannot pay. And if I say exile (and this may possibly be the penalty which you will affix), I must indeed be blinded by the love of life, if I am so irrational as to expect that when you, who are my own citizens, cannot endure my discourses and words, and have found them so grievous and odious that you will have no more of them, others are likely to endure me. No indeed, men of Athens, that is not very likely. And what a life should I lead, at my age, wandering from city to city, ever changing my place of exile, and always being driven out! For I am quite sure that wherever I go, there, as here, the young men will flock to me; and if I drive them away, their elders will drive me out at their request; and if I let them come, their fathers and friends will drive me out for their sakes.

Some one will say: Yes, Socrates, but cannot you hold your tongue, and then you may go into a foreign city, and no one will interfere with you? Now I have great difficulty in making you understand my answer to this. For if I tell you that to do as you say would be a disobedience to the God, and therefore that I cannot hold my tongue, you will not believe that I am serious; and if I say again that daily to discourse about virtue, and of those other things about which you hear me examining myself and others, is the greatest good of man, and that the unexamined life is not worth living, you are still less likely to believe me. Yet I say what is true, although a thing of which it is hard for me to persuade you. Also, I have never been accustomed to think that I deserve to suffer any harm. Had I money I might have estimated the offence at what I was able to pay, and not have been much the worse. But I have none, and therefore I must ask you to proportion the fine to my means. Well, perhaps I could afford a mina, and therefore I propose that penalty: Plato, Crito, Critobulus, and Apollodorus, my friends here, bid me say thirty minae, and they will be the sureties. Let thirty minae be the penalty; for which sum they will be ample security to you.



Not much time will be gained, O Athenians, in return for the evil name which you will get from the detractors of the city, who will say that you killed Socrates, a wise man; for they will call me wise, even although I am not wise, when they want to reproach you. If you had waited a little while, your desire would have been fulfilled in the course of nature. For I am far advanced in years, as you may perceive, and not far from death. I am speaking now not to all of you, but only to those who have condemned me to death. And I have another thing to say to them: you think that I was convicted because I had no words of the sort which would have procured my acquittal—I mean, if I had thought fit to leave nothing undone or unsaid. Not so; the deficiency which led to my conviction was not of words—certainly not. But I had not the boldness or impudence or inclination to address you as you would have liked me to do, weeping and wailing and lamenting, and saying and doing many things which you have been accustomed to hear from others, and which, as I maintain, are unworthy of me. I thought at the time that I ought not to do anything common or mean when in danger: nor do I now repent of the style of my defence; I would rather die having spoken after my manner, than speak in your manner and live. For neither in war nor yet at law ought I or any man to use every way of escaping death. Often in battle there can be no doubt that if a man will throw away his arms, and fall on his knees before his pursuers, he may escape death; and in other dangers there are other ways of escaping death, if a man is willing to say and do anything. The difficulty, my friends, is not to avoid death, but to avoid unrighteousness; for that runs faster than death. I am old and move slowly, and the slower runner has overtaken me, and my accusers are keen and quick, and the faster runner, who is unrighteousness, has overtaken them. And now I depart hence condemned by you to suffer the penalty of death,—they too go their ways condemned by the truth to suffer the penalty of villainy and wrong; and I must abide by my award—let them abide by theirs. I suppose that these things may be regarded as fated,—and I think that they are well.

And now, O men who have condemned me, I would fain prophesy to you; for I am about to die, and in the hour of death men are gifted with prophetic power. And I prophesy to you who are my murderers, that immediately after my departure punishment far heavier than you have inflicted on me will surely await you. Me you have killed because you wanted to escape the accuser, and not to give an account of your lives. But that will not be as you suppose: far otherwise. For I say that there will be more accusers of you than there are now; accusers whom hitherto I have restrained: and as they are younger they will be more inconsiderate with you, and you will be more offended at them. If you think that by killing men you can prevent some one from censuring your evil lives, you are mistaken; that is not a way of escape which is either possible or honourable; the easiest and the noblest way is not to be disabling others, but to be improving yourselves. This is the prophecy which I utter before my departure to the judges who have condemned me.

Friends, who would have acquitted me, I would like also to talk with you about the thing which has come to pass, while the magistrates are busy, and before I go to the place at which I must die. Stay then a little, for we may as well talk with one another while there is time. You are my friends, and I should like to show you the meaning of this event which



has happened to me. O my judges—for you I may truly call judges—I should like to tell you of a wonderful circumstance. Hitherto the divine faculty of which the internal oracle is the source has constantly been in the habit of opposing me even about trifles, if I was going to make a slip or error in any matter; and now as you see there has come upon me that which may be thought, and is generally believed to be, the last and worst evil. But the oracle made no sign of opposition, either when I was leaving my house in the morning, or when I was on my way to the court, or while I was speaking, at anything which I was going to say; and yet I have often been stopped in the middle of a speech, but now in nothing I either said or did touching the matter in hand has the oracle opposed me. What do I take to be the explanation of this silence? I will tell you. It is an intimation that what has happened to me is a good, and that those of us who think that death is an evil are in error. For the customary sign would surely have opposed me had I been going to evil and not to good.

[Let us reflect in another way, and we shall see that there is great reason to hope that death is a good; for one of two things—either death is a state of nothingness and utter unconsciousness, or, as men say, there is a change and migration of the soul from this world to another. Now if you suppose that there is no consciousness, but a sleep like the sleep of him who is undisturbed even by dreams, death will be an unspeakable gain. For if a person were to select the night in which his sleep was undisturbed even by dreams, and were to compare with this the other days and nights of his life, and then were to tell us how many days and nights he had passed in the course of his life better and more pleasantly than this one, I think that any man, I will not say a private man, but even the great king will not find many such days or nights, when compared with the others. Now if death be of such a nature, I say that to die is gain; for eternity is then only a single night. But if death is the journey to another place, and there, as men say, all the dead abide, what good, O my friends and judges, can be greater than this? If indeed when the pilgrim arrives in the world below, he is delivered from the professors of justice in this world, and finds the true judges who are said to give judgment there, Minos and Rhadamanthus and Aeacus and Triptolemus, and other sons of God who were righteous in their own life, that pilgrimage will be worth making. What would not a man give if he might converse with Orpheus and Musaeus and Hesiod and Homer? Nay, if this be true, let me die again and again. I myself, too, shall have a wonderful interest in there meeting and conversing with Palamedes, and Ajax the son of Telamon, and any other ancient hero who has suffered death through an unjust judgment; and there will be no small pleasure, as I think, in comparing my own sufferings with theirs. Above all, I shall then be able to continue my search into true and false knowledge; as in this world, so also in the next; and I shall find out who is wise, and who pretends to be wise, and is not. What would not a man give, O judges, to be able to examine the leader of the great Trojan expedition; or Odysseus or Sisyphus, or numberless others, men and women too! What infinite delight would there be in conversing with them and asking them questions! In another world they do not put a man to death for asking questions: assuredly not. For besides being happier than we are, they will be immortal, if what is said is true.]




Wherefore, O judges, be of good cheer about death, and know of a certainty, that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death. He and his are not neglected by the gods; nor has my own approaching end happened by mere chance. But I see clearly that the time had arrived when it was better for me to die and be released from trouble; wherefore the oracle gave no sign. For which reason, also, I am not angry with my condemners, or with my accusers; they have done me no harm, although they did not mean to do me any good; and for this I may gently blame them.

Still I have a favour to ask of them. When my sons are grown up, I would ask you, O my friends, to punish them; and I would have you trouble them, as I have troubled you, if they seem to care about riches, or anything, more than about virtue; or if they pretend to be something when they are really nothing,—then reprove them, as I have reproved you, for not caring about that for which they ought to care, and thinking that they are something when they are really nothing. And if you do this, both I and my sons will have received justice at your hands.

The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways—I to die, and you to live. Which is better God only knows.





3. Introduction to the Sophists and Plato's *Protagoras*

Plato's *Protagoras* is both an important philosophical dialogue and, in my opinion, the best work of literature that we have from Classical Greece.

Protagoras is the most famous sophist of his time, and a great thinker in his own right. The sophists were a group with widely different views, but they all had in common the fact that they were teachers of rhetoric and that they were mainly preoccupied with ethical and political questions. Although their works did not survive, their theories provided Plato with a philosophical 'enemy,' and helped him in the formulation of his own theory.

The encounter between Protagoras and Socrates is imaginary, but Plato uses it to make some crucial philosophical points. Protagoras advances a relativistic point of view, according to which there is no absolute standard of truth. Because of this, in political matters, the best course is to follow the wishes of the majority. Protagoras therefore comes up with an argument in support of conventional morality, as well as of the Athenian democracy.

Socrates responds by claiming that correct moral and political decision-making require expertise and that one needs the 'measuring art' if one is to act rightly in these matters. This view is incompatible both with the assumption that common practice makes something morally correct and with majority rule: if the majority lacks knowledge, they cannot reach the right decision.

The subject is still of vital significance today. In the dealings of the West with other cultures, should Westerners respect the worldview of other communities as equally valid with their own, even if it involves elements with which they disagree, such as violations of human rights or an inferior social role for women? To this question, Protagoras would answer by promoting non-interference, whereas Socrates could provide a basis for adopting the opposite point of view.



Protagoras

Plato

Translated by Benjamin Jowett

PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE:

Socrates, who is the narrator of the Dialogue to his Companion.

Hippocrates, Alcibiades and Critias.

Protagoras, Hippias and Prodicus (Sophists).

Callias, a wealthy Athenian.

SCENE: The House of Callias.

COMPANION: Where do you come from, Socrates? And yet I need hardly ask the question, for I know that you have been in chase of the fair Alcibiades. I saw him the day before yesterday; and he had got a beard like a man,—and he is a man, as I may tell you in your ear. But I thought that he was still very charming.

SOCRATES: What of his beard? Are you not of Homer's opinion, who says 'Youth is most charming when the beard first appears'? And that is now the charm of Alcibiades.

COMPANION: Well, and how do matters proceed? Have you been visiting him, and was he gracious to you?

SOCRATES: Yes, I thought that he was very gracious; and especially to-day, for I have just come from him, and he has been helping me in an argument. But shall I tell you a strange thing? I paid no attention to him, and several times I quite forgot that he was present.

COMPANION: What is the meaning of this? Has anything happened between you and him? For surely you cannot have discovered a fairer love than he is; certainly not in this city of Athens.

SOCRATES: Yes, much fairer.

COMPANION: What do you mean—a citizen or a foreigner?

SOCRATES: A foreigner.

COMPANION: Of what country?

SOCRATES: Of Abdera.

COMPANION: And is this stranger really in your opinion a fairer love than the son of Cleinias?

SOCRATES: And is not the wiser always the fairer, sweet friend?

COMPANION: But have you really met, Socrates, with some wise one?

SOCRATES: Say rather, with the wisest of all living men, if you are willing to accord that title to Protagoras.

COMPANION: What! Is Protagoras in Athens?

SOCRATES: Yes; he has been here two days.

COMPANION: And do you just come from an interview with him?

SOCRATES: Yes; and I have heard and said many things.

COMPANION: Then, if you have no engagement, suppose that you sit down and tell me what passed, and my attendant here shall give up his place to you.

SOCRATES: To be sure; and I shall be grateful to you for listening.

COMPANION: Thank you, too, for telling us.

SOCRATES: That is thank you twice over. Listen then: —Last night, or rather very early this morning, Hippocrates, the son of Apollodorus and the brother of Phason, gave a tremendous thump with his staff at my door; some one opened to him, and he came rushing in and bawled out: Socrates, are you awake or asleep?

I knew his voice, and said: Hippocrates, is that you? and do you bring any news?

Good news, he said; nothing but good.

Delightful, I said; but what is the news? and why have you come hither at this unearthly hour?

He drew nearer to me and said: Protagoras is come.

Yes, I replied; he came two days ago: have you only just heard of his arrival?

Yes, by the gods, he said; but not until yesterday evening.

At the same time he felt for the truckle-bed, and sat down at my feet, and then he said: Yesterday quite late in the evening, on my return from Oenoe whither I had gone in pursuit of my runaway slave Satyrus, as I meant to have told you, if some other matter had not come in the way;—on my return, when we had done supper and were about to retire to rest, my brother said to me: Protagoras is come. I was going to you at once, and then I thought that the night was far spent. But the moment sleep left me after my fatigue, I got up and came hither direct.

I, who knew the very courageous madness of the man, said: What is the matter? Has Protagoras robbed you of anything?

He replied, laughing: Yes, indeed he has, Socrates, of the wisdom which he keeps from me.



But, surely, I said, if you give him money, and make friends with him, he will make you as wise as he is himself.

Would to heaven, he replied, that this were the case! He might take all that I have, and all that my friends have, if he pleased. But that is why I have come to you now, in order that you may speak to him on my behalf; for I am young, and also I have never seen nor heard him; (when he visited Athens before I was but a child;) and all men praise him, Socrates; he is reputed to be the most accomplished of speakers. There is no reason why we should not go to him at once, and then we shall find him at home. He lodges, as I hear, with Callias the son of Hipponicus: let us start.

I replied: Not yet, my good friend; the hour is too early. But let us rise and take a turn in the court and wait about there until day-break; when the day breaks, then we will go. For Protagoras is generally at home, and we shall be sure to find him; never fear.

Upon this we got up and walked about in the court, and I thought that I would make trial of the strength of his resolution. So I examined him and put questions to him. Tell me, Hippocrates, I said, as you are going to Protagoras, and will be paying your money to him, what is he to whom you are going? and what will he make of you? If, for example, you had thought of going to Hippocrates of Cos, the Asclepiad, and were about to give him your money, and some one had said to you: You are paying money to your namesake Hippocrates, O Hippocrates; tell me, what is he that you give him money? how would you have answered?

I should say, he replied, that I gave money to him as a physician.

And what will he make of you?

A physician, he said.

And if you were resolved to go to Polycleitus the Argive, or Pheidias the Athenian, and were intending to give them money, and some one had asked you: What are Polycleitus and Pheidias? and why do you give them this money?—how would you have answered?

I should have answered, that they were statuaries.

And what will they make of you?

A statuary, of course.

Well now, I said, you and I are going to Protagoras, and we are ready to pay him money on your behalf. If our own means are sufficient, and we can gain him with these, we shall be only too glad; but if not, then we are to spend the money of your friends as well. Now suppose, that while we are thus enthusiastically pursuing our object some one were to say to us: Tell me, Socrates, and you Hippocrates, what is Protagoras, and why are you going to pay him money,—how should we answer? I know that Pheidias is a sculptor, and that Homer is a poet; but what appellation is given to Protagoras? how is he designated?

They call him a Sophist, Socrates, he replied.

Then we are going to pay our money to him in the character of a Sophist?

Certainly.

But suppose a person were to ask this further question: And how about yourself? What will Protagoras make of you, if you go to see him?



He answered, with a blush upon his face (for the day was just beginning to dawn, so that I could see him): Unless this differs in some way from the former instances, I suppose that he will make a Sophist of me.

By the gods, I said, and are you not ashamed at having to appear before the Hellenes in the character of a Sophist?

Indeed, Socrates, to confess the truth, I am.

But you should not assume, Hippocrates, that the instruction of Protagoras is of this nature: may you not learn of him in the same way that you learned the arts of the grammarian, or musician, or trainer, not with the view of making any of them a profession, but only as a part of education, and because a private gentleman and freeman ought to know them?

Just so, he said; and that, in my opinion, is a far truer account of the teaching of Protagoras.

I said: I wonder whether you know what you are doing?

And what am I doing?

You are going to commit your soul to the care of a man whom you call a Sophist. And yet I hardly think that you know what a Sophist is; and if not, then you do not even know to whom you are committing your soul and whether the thing to which you commit yourself be good or evil.

I certainly think that I do know, he replied.

Then tell me, what do you imagine that he is?

I take him to be one who knows wise things, he replied, as his name implies.

And might you not, I said, affirm this of the painter and of the carpenter also: Do not they, too, know wise things? But suppose a person were to ask us: In what are the painters wise? We should answer: In what relates to the making of likenesses, and similarly of other things. And if he were further to ask: What is the wisdom of the Sophist, and what is the manufacture over which he presides?—how should we answer him?

How should we answer him, Socrates? What other answer could there be but that he presides over the art which makes men eloquent?

Yes, I replied, that is very likely true, but not enough; for in the answer a further question is involved: Of what does the Sophist make a man talk eloquently? The player on the lyre may be supposed to make a man talk eloquently about that which he makes him understand, that is about playing the lyre. Is not that true?

Yes.

Then about what does the Sophist make him eloquent? Must not he make him eloquent in that which he understands?

Yes, that may be assumed.

And what is that which the Sophist knows and makes his disciple know?

Indeed, he said, I cannot tell.

Then I proceeded to say: Well, but are you aware of the danger which you are incurring? If you were going to commit your body to some one, who might do good or harm to it, would you not carefully consider and ask the opinion of your friends and kindred, and



deliberate many days as to whether you should give him the care of your body? But when the soul is in question, which you hold to be of far more value than the body, and upon the good or evil of which depends the well-being of your all,—about this you never consulted either with your father or with your brother or with any one of us who are your companions. But no sooner does this foreigner appear, than you instantly commit your soul to his keeping. In the evening, as you say, you hear of him, and in the morning you go to him, never deliberating or taking the opinion of any one as to whether you ought to intrust yourself to him or not;—you have quite made up your mind that you will at all hazards be a pupil of Protagoras, and are prepared to expend all the property of yourself and of your friends in carrying out at any price this determination, although, as you admit, you do not know him, and have never spoken with him: and you call him a Sophist, but are manifestly ignorant of what a Sophist is; and yet you are going to commit yourself to his keeping.

When he heard me say this, he replied: No other inference, Socrates, can be drawn from your words.

I proceeded: Is not a Sophist, Hippocrates, one who deals wholesale or retail in the food of the soul? To me that appears to be his nature.

And what, Socrates, is the food of the soul?

Surely, I said, knowledge is the food of the soul; and we must take care, my friend, that the Sophist does not deceive us when he praises what he sells, like the dealers wholesale or retail who sell the food of the body; for they praise indiscriminately all their goods, without knowing what are really beneficial or hurtful: neither do their customers know, with the exception of any trainer or physician who may happen to buy of them. In like manner those who carry about the wares of knowledge, and make the round of the cities, and sell or retail them to any customer who is in want of them, praise them all alike; though I should not wonder, O my friend, if many of them were really ignorant of their effect upon the soul; and their customers equally ignorant, unless he who buys of them happens to be a physician of the soul. If, therefore, you have understanding of what is good and evil, you may safely buy knowledge of Protagoras or of any one; but if not, then, O my friend, pause, and do not hazard your dearest interests at a game of chance. For there is far greater peril in buying knowledge than in buying meat and drink: the one you purchase of the wholesale or retail dealer, and carry them away in other vessels, and before you receive them into the body as food, you may deposit them at home and call in any experienced friend who knows what is good to be eaten or drunken, and what not, and how much, and when; and then the danger of purchasing them is not so great. But you cannot buy the wares of knowledge and carry them away in another vessel; when you have paid for them you must receive them into the soul and go your way, either greatly harmed or greatly benefited; and therefore we should deliberate and take counsel with our elders; for we are still young—too young to determine such a matter. And now let us go, as we were intending, and hear Protagoras; and when we have heard what he has to say, we may take counsel of others; for not only is Protagoras at the house of Callias, but there is Hippias of Elis, and, if I am not mistaken, Prodicus of Ceos, and several other wise men.



To this we agreed, and proceeded on our way until we reached the vestibule of the house; and there we stopped in order to conclude a discussion which had arisen between us as we were going along; and we stood talking in the vestibule until we had finished and come to an understanding. And I think that the door-keeper, who was a eunuch, and who was probably annoyed at the great inroad of the Sophists, must have heard us talking. At any rate, when we knocked at the door, and he opened and saw us, he grumbled: They are Sophists—he is not at home; and instantly gave the door a hearty bang with both his hands. Again we knocked, and he answered without opening: Did you not hear me say that he is not at home, fellows? But, my friend, I said, you need not be alarmed; for we are not Sophists, and we are not come to see Callias, but we want to see Protagoras; and I must request you to announce us. At last, after a good deal of difficulty, the man was persuaded to open the door.

When we entered, we found Protagoras taking a walk in the cloister; and next to him, on one side, were walking Callias, the son of Hipponicus, and Paralus, the son of Pericles, who, by the mother's side, is his half-brother, and Charmides, the son of Glaucon. On the other side of him were Xanthippus, the other son of Pericles, Philippides, the son of Philomelus; also Antimoerus of Mende, who of all the disciples of Protagoras is the most famous, and intends to make sophistry his profession. A train of listeners followed him; the greater part of them appeared to be foreigners, whom Protagoras had brought with him out of the various cities visited by him in his journeys, he, like Orpheus, attracting them with his voice, and they following (*Compare Rep.*). I should mention also that there were some Athenians in the company. Nothing delighted me more than the precision of their movements: they never got into his way at all; but when he and those who were with him turned back, then the band of listeners parted regularly on either side; he was always in front, and they wheeled round and took their places behind him in perfect order.

After him, as Homer says (*Od.*), 'I lifted up my eyes and saw' Hippias the Elean sitting in the opposite cloister on a chair of state, and around him were seated on benches Eryximachus, the son of Acumenus, and Phaedrus the Myrrhinusian, and Andron the son of Androtion, and there were strangers whom he had brought with him from his native city of Elis, and some others: they were putting to Hippias certain physical and astronomical questions, and he, *ex cathedra*, was determining their several questions to them, and discoursing of them.

Also, 'my eyes beheld Tantalus (*Od.*);' for Prodicus the Cean was at Athens: he had been lodged in a room which, in the days of Hipponicus, was a storehouse; but, as the house was full, Callias had cleared this out and made the room into a guest-chamber. Now Prodicus was still in bed, wrapped up in sheepskins and bedclothes, of which there seemed to be a great heap; and there was sitting by him on the couches near, Pausanias of the deme of Cerameis, and with Pausanias was a youth quite young, who is certainly remarkable for his good looks, and, if I am not mistaken, is also of a fair and gentle nature. I thought that I heard him called Agathon, and my suspicion is that he is the beloved of Pausanias. There was this youth, and also there were the two Adeimantuses, one the son of Cepis, and the



other of Leucolophides, and some others. I was very anxious to hear what Prodicus was saying, for he seems to me to be an all-wise and inspired man; but I was not able to get into the inner circle, and his fine deep voice made an echo in the room which rendered his words inaudible.

No sooner had we entered than there followed us Alcibiades the beautiful, as you say, and I believe you; and also Critias the son of Callaeschrus.

On entering we stopped a little, in order to look about us, and then walked up to Protagoras, and I said: Protagoras, my friend Hippocrates and I have come to see you.

Do you wish, he said, to speak with me alone, or in the presence of the company?

Whichever you please, I said; you shall determine when you have heard the purpose of our visit.

And what is your purpose? he said.

I must explain, I said, that my friend Hippocrates is a native Athenian; he is the son of Apollodorus, and of a great and prosperous house, and he is himself in natural ability quite a match for anybody of his own age. I believe that he aspires to political eminence; and this he thinks that conversation with you is most likely to procure for him. And now you can determine whether you would wish to speak to him of your teaching alone or in the presence of the company.

Thank you, Socrates, for your consideration of me. For certainly a stranger finding his way into great cities, and persuading the flower of the youth in them to leave company of their kinsmen or any other acquaintances, old or young, and live with him, under the idea that they will be improved by his conversation, ought to be very cautious; great jealousies are aroused by his proceedings, and he is the subject of many enmities and conspiracies. Now the art of the Sophist is, as I believe, of great antiquity; but in ancient times those who practised it, fearing this odium, veiled and disguised themselves under various names, some under that of poets, as Homer, Hesiod, and Simonides, some, of hierophants and prophets, as Orpheus and Musaeus, and some, as I observe, even under the name of gymnastic-masters, like Iccus of Tarentum, or the more recently celebrated Herodicus, now of Selymbria and formerly of Megara, who is a first-rate Sophist. Your own Agathocles pretended to be a musician, but was really an eminent Sophist; also Pythocleides the Cean; and there were many others; and all of them, as I was saying, adopted these arts as veils or disguises because they were afraid of the odium which they would incur. But that is not my way, for I do not believe that they effected their purpose, which was to deceive the government, who were not blinded by them; and as to the people, they have no understanding, and only repeat what their rulers are pleased to tell them. Now to run away, and to be caught in running away, is the very height of folly, and also greatly increases the exasperation of mankind; for they regard him who runs away as a rogue, in addition to any other objections which they have to him; and therefore I take an entirely opposite course, and acknowledge myself to be a Sophist and instructor of mankind; such an open acknowledgment appears to me to be a better sort of caution than concealment. Nor do I neglect other precautions, and therefore I hope, as I may say, by the favour of heaven that no harm will come of the acknowl-



edgment that I am a Sophist. And I have been now many years in the profession—for all my years when added up are many: there is no one here present of whom I might not be the father. Wherefore I should much prefer conversing with you, if you want to speak with me, in the presence of the company.

As I suspected that he would like to have a little display and glorification in the presence of Prodicus and Hippias, and would gladly show us to them in the light of his admirers, I said: But why should we not summon Prodicus and Hippias and their friends to hear us?

Very good, he said.

Suppose, said Callias, that we hold a council in which you may sit and discuss.—This was agreed upon, and great delight was felt at the prospect of hearing wise men talk; we ourselves took the chairs and benches, and arranged them by Hippias, where the other benches had been already placed. Meanwhile Callias and Alcibiades got Prodicus out of bed and brought in him and his companions.

When we were all seated, Protagoras said: Now that the company are assembled, Socrates, tell me about the young man of whom you were just now speaking.

I replied: I will begin again at the same point, Protagoras, and tell you once more the purport of my visit: this is my friend Hippocrates, who is desirous of making your acquaintance; he would like to know what will happen to him if he associates with you. I have no more to say.

Protagoras answered: Young man, if you associate with me, on the very first day you will return home a better man than you came, and better on the second day than on the first, and better every day than you were on the day before.

When I heard this, I said: Protagoras, I do not at all wonder at hearing you say this; even at your age, and with all your wisdom, if any one were to teach you what you did not know before, you would become better no doubt: but please to answer in a different way—I will explain how by an example. Let me suppose that Hippocrates, instead of desiring your acquaintance, wished to become acquainted with the young man Zeuxippus of Heraclea, who has lately been in Athens, and he had come to him as he has come to you, and had heard him say, as he has heard you say, that every day he would grow and become better if he associated with him: and then suppose that he were to ask him, 'In what shall I become better, and in what shall I grow?'—Zeuxippus would answer, 'In painting.' And suppose that he went to Orthagoras the Theban, and heard him say the same thing, and asked him, 'In what shall I become better day by day?' he would reply, 'In flute-playing.' Now I want you to make the same sort of answer to this young man and to me, who am asking questions on his account. When you say that on the first day on which he associates with you he will return home a better man, and on every day will grow in like manner,—in what, Protagoras, will he be better? and about what?

When Protagoras heard me say this, he replied: You ask questions fairly, and I like to answer a question which is fairly put. If Hippocrates comes to me he will not experience



the sort of drudgery with which other Sophists are in the habit of insulting their pupils; who, when they have just escaped from the arts, are taken and driven back into them by these teachers, and made to learn calculation, and astronomy, and geometry, and music (he gave a look at Hippias as he said this); but if he comes to me, he will learn that which he comes to learn. And this is prudence in affairs private as well as public; he will learn to order his own house in the best manner, and he will be able to speak and act for the best in the affairs of the state.

Do I understand you, I said; and is your meaning that you teach the art of politics, and that you promise to make men good citizens?

That, Socrates, is exactly the profession which I make.

Then, I said, you do indeed possess a noble art, if there is no mistake about this; for I will freely confess to you, Protagoras, that I have a doubt whether this art is capable of being taught, and yet I know not how to disbelieve your assertion. And I ought to tell you why I am of opinion that this art cannot be taught or communicated by man to man. I say that the Athenians are an understanding people, and indeed they are esteemed to be such by the other Hellenes. Now I observe that when we are met together in the assembly, and the matter in hand relates to building, the builders are summoned as advisers; when the question is one of ship-building, then the ship-wrights; and the like of other arts which they think capable of being taught and learned. And if some person offers to give them advice who is not supposed by them to have any skill in the art, even though he be good-looking, and rich, and noble, they will not listen to him, but laugh and hoot at him, until either he is clamoured down and retires of himself; or if he persists, he is dragged away or put out by the constables at the command of the prytanes. This is their way of behaving about professors of the arts. But when the question is an affair of state, then everybody is free to have a say—carpenter, tinker, cobbler, sailor, passenger; rich and poor, high and low—any one who likes gets up, and no one reproaches him, as in the former case, with not having learned, and having no teacher, and yet giving advice; evidently because they are under the impression that this sort of knowledge cannot be taught. And not only is this true of the state, but of individuals; the best and wisest of our citizens are unable to impart their political wisdom to others: as for example, Pericles, the father of these young men, who gave them excellent instruction in all that could be learned from masters, in his own department of politics neither taught them, nor gave them teachers; but they were allowed to wander at their own free will in a sort of hope that they would light upon virtue of their own accord. Or take another example: there was Cleinias the younger brother of our friend Alcibiades, of whom this very same Pericles was the guardian; and he being in fact under the apprehension that Cleinias would be corrupted by Alcibiades, took him away, and placed him in the house of Ariphron to be educated; but before six months had elapsed, Ariphron sent him back, not knowing what to do with him. And I could mention numberless other instances of persons who were good themselves, and never yet made any one else good, whether friend or stranger. Now I, Protagoras, having these examples before me, am inclined to think that virtue cannot be taught. But then again, when I listen to your words, I waver; and am disposed to think that



there must be something in what you say, because I know that you have great experience, and learning, and invention. And I wish that you would, if possible, show me a little more clearly that virtue can be taught. Will you be so good?

That I will, Socrates, and gladly. But what would you like? Shall I, as an elder, speak to you as younger men in an apologue or myth, or shall I argue out the question?

To this several of the company answered that he should choose for himself.

Well, then, he said, I think that the myth will be more interesting.

Once upon a time there were gods only, and no mortal creatures. But when the time came that these also should be created, the gods fashioned them out of earth and fire and various mixtures of both elements in the interior of the earth; and when they were about to bring them into the light of day, they ordered Prometheus and Epimetheus to equip them, and to distribute to them severally their proper qualities. Epimetheus said to Prometheus: 'Let me distribute, and do you inspect.' This was agreed, and Epimetheus made the distribution. There were some to whom he gave strength without swiftness, while he equipped the weaker with swiftness; some he armed, and others he left unarmed; and devised for the latter some other means of preservation, making some large, and having their size as a protection, and others small, whose nature was to fly in the air or burrow in the ground; this was to be their way of escape. Thus did he compensate them with the view of preventing any race from becoming extinct. And when he had provided against their destruction by one another, he contrived also a means of protecting them against the seasons of heaven; clothing them with close hair and thick skins sufficient to defend them against the winter cold and able to resist the summer heat, so that they might have a natural bed of their own when they wanted to rest; also he furnished them with hoofs and hair and hard and callous skins under their feet. Then he gave them varieties of food,—herb of the soil to some, to others fruits of trees, and to others roots, and to some again he gave other animals as food. And some he made to have few young ones, while those who were their prey were very prolific; and in this manner the race was preserved. Thus did Epimetheus, who, not being very wise, forgot that he had distributed among the brute animals all the qualities which he had to give,—and when he came to man, who was still unprovided, he was terribly perplexed. Now while he was in this perplexity, Prometheus came to inspect the distribution, and he found that the other animals were suitably furnished, but that man alone was naked and shoeless, and had neither bed nor arms of defence. The appointed hour was approaching when man in his turn was to go forth into the light of day; and Prometheus, not knowing how he could devise his salvation, stole the mechanical arts of Hephaestus and Athene, and fire with them (they could neither have been acquired nor used without fire), and gave them to man. Thus man had the wisdom necessary to the support of life, but political wisdom he had not; for that was in the keeping of Zeus, and the power of Prometheus did not extend to entering into the citadel of heaven, where Zeus dwelt, who moreover had terrible sentinels; but he did enter by stealth into the common workshop of Athene and Hephaestus, in which they used to practise their favourite arts, and carried off Hephaestus' art of working by fire, and also the art of Athene, and gave them to man. And in this way man was supplied with the means of life.



But Prometheus is said to have been afterwards prosecuted for theft, owing to the blunder of Epimetheus.

Now man, having a share of the divine attributes, was at first the only one of the animals who had any gods, because he alone was of their kindred; and he would raise altars and images of them. He was not long in inventing articulate speech and names; and he also constructed houses and clothes and shoes and beds, and drew sustenance from the earth. Thus provided, mankind at first lived dispersed, and there were no cities. But the consequence was that they were destroyed by the wild beasts, for they were utterly weak in comparison of them, and their art was only sufficient to provide them with the means of life, and did not enable them to carry on war against the animals: food they had, but not as yet the art of government, of which the art of war is a part. After a while the desire of self-preservation gathered them into cities; but when they were gathered together, having no art of government, they evil intreated one another, and were again in process of dispersion and destruction. Zeus feared that the entire race would be exterminated, and so he sent Hermes to them, bearing reverence and justice to be the ordering principles of cities and the bonds of friendship and conciliation. Hermes asked Zeus how he should impart justice and reverence among men:—Should he distribute them as the arts are distributed; that is to say, to a favoured few only, one skilled individual having enough of medicine or of any other art for many unskilled ones? ‘Shall this be the manner in which I am to distribute justice and reverence among men, or shall I give them to all?’ ‘To all,’ said Zeus; ‘I should like them all to have a share; for cities cannot exist, if a few only share in the virtues, as in the arts. And further, make a law by my order, that he who has no part in reverence and justice shall be put to death, for he is a plague of the state.’

And this is the reason, Socrates, why the Athenians and mankind in general, when the question relates to carpentering or any other mechanical art, allow but a few to share in their deliberations; and when any one else interferes, then, as you say, they object, if he be not of the favoured few; which, as I reply, is very natural. But when they meet to deliberate about political virtue, which proceeds only by way of justice and wisdom, they are patient enough of any man who speaks of them, as is also natural, because they think that every man ought to share in this sort of virtue, and that states could not exist if this were otherwise. I have explained to you, Socrates, the reason of this phenomenon.

And that you may not suppose yourself to be deceived in thinking that all men regard every man as having a share of justice or honesty and of every other political virtue, let me give you a further proof, which is this. In other cases, as you are aware, if a man says that he is a good flute-player, or skilful in any other art in which he has no skill, people either laugh at him or are angry with him, and his relations think that he is mad and go and admonish him; but when honesty is in question, or some other political virtue, even if they know that he is dishonest, yet, if the man comes publicly forward and tells the truth about his dishonesty, then, what in the other case was held by them to be good sense, they now deem to be madness. They say that all men ought to profess honesty whether they are honest or not, and that a man is out of his mind who says anything else. Their notion is, that a



man must have some degree of honesty; and that if he has none at all he ought not to be in the world.

I have been showing that they are right in admitting every man as a counsellor about this sort of virtue, as they are of opinion that every man is a partaker of it. And I will now endeavour to show further that they do not conceive this virtue to be given by nature, or to grow spontaneously, but to be a thing which may be taught; and which comes to a man by taking pains. No one would instruct, no one would rebuke, or be angry with those whose calamities they suppose to be due to nature or chance; they do not try to punish or to prevent them from being what they are; they do but pity them. Who is so foolish as to chastise or instruct the ugly, or the diminutive, or the feeble? And for this reason. Because he knows that good and evil of this kind is the work of nature and of chance; whereas if a man is wanting in those good qualities which are attained by study and exercise and teaching, and has only the contrary evil qualities, other men are angry with him, and punish and reprove him—of these evil qualities one is impiety, another injustice, and they may be described generally as the very opposite of political virtue. In such cases any man will be angry with another, and reprimand him,—clearly because he thinks that by study and learning, the virtue in which the other is deficient may be acquired. If you will think, Socrates, of the nature of punishment, you will see at once that in the opinion of mankind virtue may be acquired; no one punishes the evil-doer under the notion, or for the reason, that he has done wrong,—only the unreasonable fury of a beast acts in that manner. But he who desires to inflict rational punishment does not retaliate for a past wrong which cannot be undone; he has regard to the future, and is desirous that the man who is punished, and he who sees him punished, may be deterred from doing wrong again. He punishes for the sake of prevention, thereby clearly implying that virtue is capable of being taught. This is the notion of all who retaliate upon others either privately or publicly. And the Athenians, too, your own citizens, like other men, punish and take vengeance on all whom they regard as evil doers; and hence, we may infer them to be of the number of those who think that virtue may be acquired and taught. Thus far, Socrates, I have shown you clearly enough, if I am not mistaken, that your countrymen are right in admitting the tinker and the cobbler to advise about politics, and also that they deem virtue to be capable of being taught and acquired.

There yet remains one difficulty which has been raised by you about the sons of good men. What is the reason why good men teach their sons the knowledge which is gained from teachers, and make them wise in that, but do nothing towards improving them in the virtues which distinguish themselves? And here, Socrates, I will leave the apologue and resume the argument. Please to consider: Is there or is there not some one quality of which all the citizens must be partakers, if there is to be a city at all? In the answer to this question is contained the only solution of your difficulty; there is no other. For if there be any such quality, and this quality or unity is not the art of the carpenter, or the smith, or the potter, but justice and temperance and holiness and, in a word, manly virtue—if this is the quality of which all men must be partakers, and which is the very condition of their learning or doing anything else, and if he who is wanting in this, whether he be a child only or



a grown-up man or woman, must be taught and punished, until by punishment he becomes better, and he who rebels against instruction and punishment is either exiled or condemned to death under the idea that he is incurable—if what I am saying be true, good men have their sons taught other things and not this, do consider how extraordinary their conduct would appear to be. For we have shown that they think virtue capable of being taught and cultivated both in private and public; and, notwithstanding, they have their sons taught lesser matters, ignorance of which does not involve the punishment of death: but greater things, of which the ignorance may cause death and exile to those who have no training or knowledge of them—aye, and confiscation as well as death, and, in a word, may be the ruin of families—those things, I say, they are supposed not to teach them,—not to take the utmost care that they should learn. How improbable is this, Socrates!

Education and admonition commence in the first years of childhood, and last to the very end of life. Mother and nurse and father and tutor are vying with one another about the improvement of the child as soon as ever he is able to understand what is being said to him: he cannot say or do anything without their setting forth to him that this is just and that is unjust; this is honourable, that is dishonourable; this is holy, that is unholy; do this and abstain from that. And if he obeys, well and good; if not, he is straightened by threats and blows, like a piece of bent or warped wood. At a later stage they send him to teachers, and enjoin them to see to his manners even more than to his reading and music; and the teachers do as they are desired. And when the boy has learned his letters and is beginning to understand what is written, as before he understood only what was spoken, they put into his hands the works of great poets, which he reads sitting on a bench at school; in these are contained many admonitions, and many tales, and praises, and encomia of ancient famous men, which he is required to learn by heart, in order that he may imitate or emulate them and desire to become like them. Then, again, the teachers of the lyre take similar care that their young disciple is temperate and gets into no mischief; and when they have taught him the use of the lyre, they introduce him to the poems of other excellent poets, who are the lyric poets; and these they set to music, and make their harmonies and rhythms quite familiar to the children's souls, in order that they may learn to be more gentle, and harmonious, and rhythmical, and so more fitted for speech and action; for the life of man in every part has need of harmony and rhythm. Then they send them to the master of gymnastic, in order that their bodies may better minister to the virtuous mind, and that they may not be compelled through bodily weakness to play the coward in war or on any other occasion. This is what is done by those who have the means, and those who have the means are the rich; their children begin to go to school soonest and leave off latest. When they have done with masters, the state again compels them to learn the laws, and live after the pattern which they furnish, and not after their own fancies; and just as in learning to write, the writing-master first draws lines with a style for the use of the young beginner, and gives him the tablet and makes him follow the lines, so the city draws the laws, which were the invention of good lawgivers living in the olden time; these are given to the young man, in order to guide him in his conduct whether he is commanding or obeying; and he who transgresses



them is to be corrected, or, in other words, called to account, which is a term used not only in your country, but also in many others, seeing that justice calls men to account. Now when there is all this care about virtue private and public, why, Socrates, do you still wonder and doubt whether virtue can be taught? Cease to wonder, for the opposite would be far more surprising.

But why then do the sons of good fathers often turn out ill? There is nothing very wonderful in this; for, as I have been saying, the existence of a state implies that virtue is not any man's private possession. If so—and nothing can be truer—then I will further ask you to imagine, as an illustration, some other pursuit or branch of knowledge which may be assumed equally to be the condition of the existence of a state. Suppose that there could be no state unless we were all flute-players, as far as each had the capacity, and everybody was freely teaching everybody the art, both in private and public, and reproving the bad player as freely and openly as every man now teaches justice and the laws, not concealing them as he would conceal the other arts, but imparting them—for all of us have a mutual interest in the justice and virtue of one another, and this is the reason why every one is so ready to teach justice and the laws;—suppose, I say, that there were the same readiness and liberality among us in teaching one another flute-playing, do you imagine, Socrates, that the sons of good flute-players would be more likely to be good than the sons of bad ones? I think not. Would not their sons grow up to be distinguished or undistinguished according to their own natural capacities as flute-players, and the son of a good player would often turn out to be a bad one, and the son of a bad player to be a good one, all flute-players would be good enough in comparison of those who were ignorant and unacquainted with the art of flute-playing? In like manner I would have you consider that he who appears to you to be the worst of those who have been brought up in laws and humanities, would appear to be a just man and a master of justice if he were to be compared with men who had no education, or courts of justice, or laws, or any restraints upon them which compelled them to practise virtue—with the savages, for example, whom the poet Pherecrates exhibited on the stage at the last year's Lenaeon festival. If you were living among men such as the man-haters in his Chorus, you would be only too glad to meet with Eurybates and Phrynondas, and you would sorrowfully long to revisit the rascality of this part of the world. You, Socrates, are discontented, and why? Because all men are teachers of virtue, each one according to his ability; and you say Where are the teachers? You might as well ask, Who teaches Greek? For of that too there will not be any teachers found. Or you might ask, Who is to teach the sons of our artisans this same art which they have learned of their fathers? He and his fellow-workmen have taught them to the best of their ability,—but who will carry them further in their arts? And you would certainly have a difficulty, Socrates, in finding a teacher of them; but there would be no difficulty in finding a teacher of those who are wholly ignorant. And this is true of virtue or of anything else; if a man is better able than we are to promote virtue ever so little, we must be content with the result. A teacher of this sort I believe myself to be, and above all other men to have the knowledge which makes a man noble and good; and I give my pupils their money's-worth, and even more, as they



themselves confess. And therefore I have introduced the following mode of payment:—When a man has been my pupil, if he likes he pays my price, but there is no compulsion; and if he does not like, he has only to go into a temple and take an oath of the value of the instructions, and he pays no more than he declares to be their value.

Such is my Apologue, Socrates, and such is the argument by which I endeavour to show that virtue may be taught, and that this is the opinion of the Athenians. And I have also attempted to show that you are not to wonder at good fathers having bad sons, or at good sons having bad fathers, of which the sons of Polycleitus afford an example, who are the companions of our friends here, Paralus and Xanthippus, but are nothing in comparison with their father; and this is true of the sons of many other artists. As yet I ought not to say the same of Paralus and Xanthippus themselves, for they are young and there is still hope of them.

Protagoras ended, and in my ear

‘So charming left his voice, that I the while Thought him still speaking; still stood fixed to hear (Borrowed by Milton, “Paradise Lost”).’

At length, when the truth dawned upon me, that he had really finished, not without difficulty I began to collect myself, and looking at Hippocrates, I said to him: O son of Apollodorus, how deeply grateful I am to you for having brought me hither; I would not have missed the speech of Protagoras for a great deal. For I used to imagine that no human care could make men good; but I know better now. Yet I have still one very small difficulty which I am sure that Protagoras will easily explain, as he has already explained so much. If a man were to go and consult Pericles or any of our great speakers about these matters, he might perhaps hear as fine a discourse; but then when one has a question to ask of any of them, like books, they can neither answer nor ask; and if any one challenges the least particular of their speech, they go ringing on in a long harangue, like brazen pots, which when they are struck continue to sound unless some one puts his hand upon them; whereas our friend Protagoras can not only make a good speech, as he has already shown, but when he is asked a question he can answer briefly; and when he asks he will wait and hear the answer; and this is a very rare gift. Now I, Protagoras, want to ask of you a little question, which if you will only answer, I shall be quite satisfied. You were saying that virtue can be taught;—that I will take upon your authority, and there is no one to whom I am more ready to trust. But I marvel at one thing about which I should like to have my mind set at rest. You were speaking of Zeus sending justice and reverence to men; and several times while you were speaking, justice, and temperance, and holiness, and all these qualities, were described by you as if together they made up virtue. Now I want you to tell me truly whether virtue is one whole, of which justice and temperance and holiness are parts; or whether all these are only the names of one and the same thing: that is the doubt which still lingers in my mind.

There is no difficulty, Socrates, in answering that the qualities of which you are speaking are the parts of virtue which is one.



And are they parts, I said, in the same sense in which mouth, nose, and eyes, and ears, are the parts of a face; or are they like the parts of gold, which differ from the whole and from one another only in being larger or smaller?

I should say that they differed, Socrates, in the first way; they are related to one another as the parts of a face are related to the whole face.

And do men have some one part and some another part of virtue? Or if a man has one part, must he also have all the others?

By no means, he said; for many a man is brave and not just, or just and not wise.

You would not deny, then, that courage and wisdom are also parts of virtue?

Most undoubtedly they are, he answered; and wisdom is the noblest of the parts.

And they are all different from one another? I said.

Yes.

And has each of them a distinct function like the parts of the face;—the eye, for example, is not like the ear, and has not the same functions; and the other parts are none of them like one another, either in their functions, or in any other way? I want to know whether the comparison holds concerning the parts of virtue. Do they also differ from one another in themselves and in their functions? For that is clearly what the simile would imply.

Yes, Socrates, you are right in supposing that they differ.

Then, I said, no other part of virtue is like knowledge, or like justice, or like courage, or like temperance, or like holiness?

No, he answered.

Well then, I said, suppose that you and I enquire into their natures. And first, you would agree with me that justice is of the nature of a thing, would you not? That is my opinion: would it not be yours also?

Mine also, he said.

And suppose that some one were to ask us, saying, 'O Protagoras, and you, Socrates, what about this thing which you were calling justice, is it just or unjust?'—and I were to answer, just: would you vote with me or against me?

With you, he said.

Thereupon I should answer to him who asked me, that justice is of the nature of the just: would not you?

Yes, he said.

And suppose that he went on to say: 'Well now, is there also such a thing as holiness?'—we should answer, 'Yes,' if I am not mistaken?

Yes, he said.

Which you would also acknowledge to be a thing—should we not say so?

He assented.

'And is this a sort of thing which is of the nature of the holy, or of the nature of the unholy?' I should be angry at his putting such a question, and should say, 'Peace, man; nothing can be holy if holiness is not holy.' What would you say? Would you not answer in the same way?



Certainly, he said.

And then after this suppose that he came and asked us, 'What were you saying just now? Perhaps I may not have heard you rightly, but you seemed to me to be saying that the parts of virtue were not the same as one another.' I should reply, 'You certainly heard that said, but not, as you imagine, by me; for I only asked the question; Protagoras gave the answer.' And suppose that he turned to you and said, 'Is this true, Protagoras? and do you maintain that one part of virtue is unlike another, and is this your position?'—how would you answer him?

I could not help acknowledging the truth of what he said, Socrates.

Well then, Protagoras, we will assume this; and now supposing that he proceeded to say further, 'Then holiness is not of the nature of justice, nor justice of the nature of holiness, but of the nature of unholiness; and holiness is of the nature of the not just, and therefore of the unjust, and the unjust is the unholy': how shall we answer him? I should certainly answer him on my own behalf that justice is holy, and that holiness is just; and I would say in like manner on your behalf also, if you would allow me, that justice is either the same with holiness, or very nearly the same; and above all I would assert that justice is like holiness and holiness is like justice; and I wish that you would tell me whether I may be permitted to give this answer on your behalf, and whether you would agree with me.

He replied, I cannot simply agree, Socrates, to the proposition that justice is holy and that holiness is just, for there appears to me to be a difference between them. But what matter? if you please I please; and let us assume, if you will I, that justice is holy, and that holiness is just.

Pardon me, I replied; I do not want this 'if you wish' or 'if you will' sort of conclusion to be proven, but I want you and me to be proven: I mean to say that the conclusion will be best proven if there be no 'if.'

Well, he said, I admit that justice bears a resemblance to holiness, for there is always some point of view in which everything is like every other thing; white is in a certain way like black, and hard is like soft, and the most extreme opposites have some qualities in common; even the parts of the face which, as we were saying before, are distinct and have different functions, are still in a certain point of view similar, and one of them is like another of them. And you may prove that they are like one another on the same principle that all things are like one another; and yet things which are like in some particular ought not to be called alike, nor things which are unlike in some particular, however slight, unlike.

And do you think, I said in a tone of surprise, that justice and holiness have but a small degree of likeness?

Certainly not; any more than I agree with what I understand to be your view.

Well, I said, as you appear to have a difficulty about this, let us take another of the examples which you mentioned instead. Do you admit the existence of folly?

I do.

And is not wisdom the very opposite of folly?

That is true, he said.



And when men act rightly and advantageously they seem to you to be temperate?

Yes, he said.

And temperance makes them temperate?

Certainly.

And they who do not act rightly act foolishly, and in acting thus are not temperate?

I agree, he said.

Then to act foolishly is the opposite of acting temperately?

He assented.

And foolish actions are done by folly, and temperate actions by temperance?

He agreed.

And that is done strongly which is done by strength, and that which is weakly done, by weakness?

He assented.

And that which is done with swiftness is done swiftly, and that which is done with slowness, slowly?

He assented again.

And that which is done in the same manner, is done by the same; and that which is done in an opposite manner by the opposite?

He agreed.

Once more, I said, is there anything beautiful?

Yes.

To which the only opposite is the ugly?

There is no other.

And is there anything good?

There is.

To which the only opposite is the evil?

There is no other.

And there is the acute in sound?

True.

To which the only opposite is the grave?

There is no other, he said, but that.

Then every opposite has one opposite only and no more?

He assented.

Then now, I said, let us recapitulate our admissions. First of all we admitted that everything has one opposite and not more than one?

We did so.

And we admitted also that what was done in opposite ways was done by opposites?

Yes.

And that which was done foolishly, as we further admitted, was done in the opposite way to that which was done temperately?

Yes.



And that which was done temperately was done by temperance, and that which was done foolishly by folly?

He agreed.

And that which is done in opposite ways is done by opposites?

Yes.

And one thing is done by temperance, and quite another thing by folly?

Yes.

And in opposite ways?

Certainly.

And therefore by opposites:—then folly is the opposite of temperance?

Clearly.

And do you remember that folly has already been acknowledged by us to be the opposite of wisdom?

He assented.

And we said that everything has only one opposite?

Yes.

Then, Protagoras, which of the two assertions shall we renounce? One says that everything has but one opposite; the other that wisdom is distinct from temperance, and that both of them are parts of virtue; and that they are not only distinct, but dissimilar, both in themselves and in their functions, like the parts of a face. Which of these two assertions shall we renounce? For both of them together are certainly not in harmony; they do not accord or agree: for how can they be said to agree if everything is assumed to have only one opposite and not more than one, and yet folly, which is one, has clearly the two opposites—wisdom and temperance? Is not that true, Protagoras? What else would you say?

He assented, but with great reluctance.

Then temperance and wisdom are the same, as before justice and holiness appeared to us to be nearly the same. And now, Protagoras, I said, we must finish the enquiry, and not faint. Do you think that an unjust man can be temperate in his injustice?

I should be ashamed, Socrates, he said, to acknowledge this, which nevertheless many may be found to assert.

And shall I argue with them or with you? I replied.

I would rather, he said, that you should argue with the many first, if you will.

Whichever you please, if you will only answer me and say whether you are of their opinion or not. My object is to test the validity of the argument; and yet the result may be that I who ask and you who answer may both be put on our trial.

Protagoras at first made a show of refusing, as he said that the argument was not encouraging; at length, he consented to answer.

Now then, I said, begin at the beginning and answer me. You think that some men are temperate, and yet unjust?

Yes, he said; let that be admitted.

And temperance is good sense?



Yes.

And good sense is good counsel in doing injustice?

Granted.

If they succeed, I said, or if they do not succeed?

If they succeed.

And you would admit the existence of goods?

Yes.

And is the good that which is expedient for man?

Yes, indeed, he said: and there are some things which may be inexpedient, and yet I call them good.

I thought that Protagoras was getting ruffled and excited; he seemed to be setting himself in an attitude of war. Seeing this, I minded my business, and gently said:—

When you say, Protagoras, that things inexpedient are good, do you mean inexpedient for man only, or inexpedient altogether? and do you call the latter good?

Certainly not the last, he replied; for I know of many things—meats, drinks, medicines, and ten thousand other things, which are inexpedient for man, and some which are expedient; and some which are neither expedient nor inexpedient for man, but only for horses; and some for oxen only, and some for dogs; and some for no animals, but only for trees; and some for the roots of trees and not for their branches, as for example, manure, which is a good thing when laid about the roots of a tree, but utterly destructive if thrown upon the shoots and young branches; or I may instance olive oil, which is mischievous to all plants, and generally most injurious to the hair of every animal with the exception of man, but beneficial to human hair and to the human body generally; and even in this application (so various and changeable is the nature of the benefit), that which is the greatest good to the outward parts of a man, is a very great evil to his inward parts: and for this reason physicians always forbid their patients the use of oil in their food, except in very small quantities, just enough to extinguish the disagreeable sensation of smell in meats and sauces.

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So I said: Do not imagine, Protagoras, that I have any other interest in asking questions of you but that of clearing up my own difficulties. For I think that Homer was very right in saying that

‘When two go together, one sees before the other (II.),’

for all men who have a companion are readier in deed, word, or thought; but if a man ‘Sees a thing when he is alone,’

he goes about straightway seeking until he finds some one to whom he may show his discoveries, and who may confirm him in them. And I would rather hold discourse with you than with any one, because I think that no man has a better understanding of most things which a good man may be expected to understand, and in particular of virtue. For who is



there, but you?—who not only claim to be a good man and a gentleman, for many are this, and yet have not the power of making others good—whereas you are not only good yourself, but also the cause of goodness in others. Moreover such confidence have you in yourself, that although other Sophists conceal their profession, you proclaim in the face of Hellas that you are a Sophist or teacher of virtue and education, and are the first who demanded pay in return. How then can I do otherwise than invite you to the examination of these subjects, and ask questions and consult with you? I must, indeed. And I should like once more to have my memory refreshed by you about the questions which I was asking you at first, and also to have your help in considering them. If I am not mistaken the question was this: Are wisdom and temperance and courage and justice and holiness five names of the same thing? or has each of the names a separate underlying essence and corresponding thing having a peculiar function, no one of them being like any other of them? And you replied that the five names were not the names of the same thing, but that each of them had a separate object, and that all these objects were parts of virtue, not in the same way that the parts of gold are like each other and the whole of which they are parts, but as the parts of the face are unlike the whole of which they are parts and one another, and have each of them a distinct function. I should like to know whether this is still your opinion; or if not, I will ask you to define your meaning, and I shall not take you to task if you now make a different statement. For I dare say that you may have said what you did only in order to make trial of me.

I answer, Socrates, he said, that all these qualities are parts of virtue, and that four out of the five are to some extent similar, and that the fifth of them, which is courage, is very different from the other four, as I prove in this way: You may observe that many men are utterly unrighteous, unholy, intemperate, ignorant, who are nevertheless remarkable for their courage.

Stop, I said; I should like to think about that. When you speak of brave men, do you mean the confident, or another sort of nature?

Yes, he said; I mean the impetuous, ready to go at that which others are afraid to approach.

In the next place, you would affirm virtue to be a good thing, of which good thing you assert yourself to be a teacher.

Yes, he said; I should say the best of all things, if I am in my right mind.

And is it partly good and partly bad, I said, or wholly good?

Wholly good, and in the highest degree.

Tell me then; who are they who have confidence when diving into a well?

I should say, the divers.

And the reason of this is that they have knowledge?

Yes, that is the reason.

And who have confidence when fighting on horseback—the skilled horseman or the unskilled?

The skilled.



And who when fighting with light shields—the peltasts or the nonpeltasts?

The peltasts. And that is true of all other things, he said, if that is your point: those who have knowledge are more confident than those who have no knowledge, and they are more confident after they have learned than before.

And have you not seen persons utterly ignorant, I said, of these things, and yet confident about them?

Yes, he said, I have seen such persons far too confident.

And are not these confident persons also courageous?

In that case, he replied, courage would be a base thing, for the men of whom we are speaking are surely madmen.

Then who are the courageous? Are they not the confident?

Yes, he said; to that statement I adhere.

And those, I said, who are thus confident without knowledge are really not courageous, but mad; and in that case the wisest are also the most confident, and being the most confident are also the bravest, and upon that view again wisdom will be courage.

Nay, Socrates, he replied, you are mistaken in your remembrance of what was said by me. When you asked me, I certainly did say that the courageous are the confident; but I was never asked whether the confident are the courageous; if you had asked me, I should have answered 'Not all of them': and what I did answer you have not proved to be false, although you proceeded to show that those who have knowledge are more courageous than they were before they had knowledge, and more courageous than others who have no knowledge, and were then led on to think that courage is the same as wisdom. But in this way of arguing you might come to imagine that strength is wisdom. You might begin by asking whether the strong are able, and I should say 'Yes'; and then whether those who know how to wrestle are not more able to wrestle than those who do not know how to wrestle, and more able after than before they had learned, and I should assent. And when I had admitted this, you might use my admissions in such a way as to prove that upon my view wisdom is strength; whereas in that case I should not have admitted, any more than in the other, that the able are strong, although I have admitted that the strong are able. For there is a difference between ability and strength; the former is given by knowledge as well as by madness or rage, but strength comes from nature and a healthy state of the body. And in like manner I say of confidence and courage, that they are not the same; and I argue that the courageous are confident, but not all the confident courageous. For confidence may be given to men by art, and also, like ability, by madness and rage; but courage comes to them from nature and the healthy state of the soul.

I said: You would admit, Protagoras, that some men live well and others ill?

He assented.

And do you think that a man lives well who lives in pain and grief?

He does not.

But if he lives pleasantly to the end of his life, will he not in that case have lived well?



He will.

Then to live pleasantly is a good, and to live unpleasantly an evil?

Yes, he said, if the pleasure be good and honourable.

And do you, Protagoras, like the rest of the world, call some pleasant things evil and some painful things good?—for I am rather disposed to say that things are good in as far as they are pleasant, if they have no consequences of another sort, and in as far as they are painful they are bad.

I do not know, Socrates, he said, whether I can venture to assert in that unqualified manner that the pleasant is the good and the painful the evil. Having regard not only to my present answer, but also to the whole of my life, I shall be safer, if I am not mistaken, in saying that there are some pleasant things which are not good, and that there are some painful things which are good, and some which are not good, and that there are some which are neither good nor evil.

And you would call pleasant, I said, the things which participate in pleasure or create pleasure?

Certainly, he said.

Then my meaning is, that in as far as they are pleasant they are good; and my question would imply that pleasure is a good in itself.

According to your favourite mode of speech, Socrates, 'Let us reflect about this,' he said; and if the reflection is to the point, and the result proves that pleasure and good are really the same, then we will agree; but if not, then we will argue.

And would you wish to begin the enquiry? I said; or shall I begin?

You ought to take the lead, he said; for you are the author of the discussion.

May I employ an illustration? I said. Suppose some one who is enquiring into the health or some other bodily quality of another:—he looks at his face and at the tips of his fingers, and then he says, Uncover your chest and back to me that I may have a better view:—that is the sort of thing which I desire in this speculation. Having seen what your opinion is about good and pleasure, I am minded to say to you: Uncover your mind to me, Protagoras, and reveal your opinion about knowledge, that I may know whether you agree with the rest of the world. Now the rest of the world are of the opinion that knowledge is a principle not of strength, or of rule, or of command: their notion is that a man may have knowledge, and yet that the knowledge which is in him may be overmastered by anger, or pleasure, or pain, or love, or perhaps by fear,—just as if knowledge were a slave, and might be dragged about anyhow. Now is that your view? or do you think that knowledge is a noble and commanding thing, which cannot be overcome, and will not allow a man, if he only knows the difference of good and evil, to do anything which is contrary to knowledge, but that wisdom will have strength to help him?

I agree with you, Socrates, said Protagoras; and not only so, but I, above all other men, am bound to say that wisdom and knowledge are the highest of human things.



Good, I said, and true. But are you aware that the majority of the world are of another mind; and that men are commonly supposed to know the things which are best, and not to do them when they might? And most persons whom I have asked the reason of this have said that when men act contrary to knowledge they are overcome by pain, or pleasure, or some of those affections which I was just now mentioning.

Yes, Socrates, he replied; and that is not the only point about which mankind are in error.

Suppose, then, that you and I endeavour to instruct and inform them what is the nature of this affection which they call 'being overcome by pleasure,' and which they affirm to be the reason why they do not always do what is best. When we say to them: Friends, you are mistaken, and are saying what is not true, they would probably reply: Socrates and Protagoras, if this affection of the soul is not to be called 'being overcome by pleasure,' pray, what is it, and by what name would you describe it?

But why, Socrates, should we trouble ourselves about the opinion of the many, who just say anything that happens to occur to them?

I believe, I said, that they may be of use in helping us to discover how courage is related to the other parts of virtue. If you are disposed to abide by our agreement, that I should show the way in which, as I think, our recent difficulty is most likely to be cleared up, do you follow; but if not, never mind.

You are quite right, he said; and I would have you proceed as you have begun.

Well then, I said, let me suppose that they repeat their question, What account do you give of that which, in our way of speaking, is termed being overcome by pleasure? I should answer thus: Listen, and Protagoras and I will endeavour to show you. When men are overcome by eating and drinking and other sensual desires which are pleasant, and they, knowing them to be evil, nevertheless indulge in them, would you not say that they were overcome by pleasure? They will not deny this. And suppose that you and I were to go on and ask them again: 'In what way do you say that they are evil,—in that they are pleasant and give pleasure at the moment, or because they cause disease and poverty and other like evils in the future? Would they still be evil, if they had no attendant evil consequences, simply because they give the consciousness of pleasure of whatever nature?'—Would they not answer that they are not evil on account of the pleasure which is immediately given by them, but on account of the after consequences—diseases and the like?

I believe, said Protagoras, that the world in general would answer as you do.

And in causing diseases do they not cause pain? and in causing poverty do they not cause pain;—they would agree to that also, if I am not mistaken?

Protagoras assented.

Then I should say to them, in my name and yours: Do you think them evil for any other reason, except because they end in pain and rob us of other pleasures:—there again they would agree?

We both of us thought that they would.



And then I should take the question from the opposite point of view, and say: 'Friends, when you speak of goods being painful, do you not mean remedial goods, such as gymnastic exercises, and military service, and the physician's use of burning, cutting, drugging, and starving? Are these the things which are good but painful?'—they would assent to me?

He agreed.

'And do you call them good because they occasion the greatest immediate suffering and pain; or because, afterwards, they bring health and improvement of the bodily condition and the salvation of states and power over others and wealth?'—they would agree to the latter alternative, if I am not mistaken?

He assented.

'Are these things good for any other reason except that they end in pleasure, and get rid of and avert pain? Are you looking to any other standard but pleasure and pain when you call them good?'—they would acknowledge that they were not?

I think so, said Protagoras.

'And do you not pursue after pleasure as a good, and avoid pain as an evil?'

He assented.

'Then you think that pain is an evil and pleasure is a good: and even pleasure you deem an evil, when it robs you of greater pleasures than it gives, or causes pains greater than the pleasure. If, however, you call pleasure an evil in relation to some other end or standard, you will be able to show us that standard. But you have none to show.'

I do not think that they have, said Protagoras.

'And have you not a similar way of speaking about pain? You call pain a good when it takes away greater pains than those which it has, or gives pleasures greater than the pains: then if you have some standard other than pleasure and pain to which you refer when you call actual pain a good, you can show what that is. But you cannot.'

True, said Protagoras.

Suppose again, I said, that the world says to me: 'Why do you spend many words and speak in many ways on this subject?' Excuse me, friends, I should reply; but in the first place there is a difficulty in explaining the meaning of the expression 'overcome by pleasure'; and the whole argument turns upon this. And even now, if you see any possible way in which evil can be explained as other than pain, or good as other than pleasure, you may still retract. Are you satisfied, then, at having a life of pleasure which is without pain? If you are, and if you are unable to show any good or evil which does not end in pleasure and pain, hear the consequences:—If what you say is true, then the argument is absurd which affirms that a man often does evil knowingly, when he might abstain, because he is seduced and overpowered by pleasure; or again, when you say that a man knowingly refuses to do what is good because he is overcome at the moment by pleasure. And that this is ridiculous will be evident if only we give up the use of various names, such as pleasant and painful, and good and evil. As there are two things, let us call them by two names—first, good and evil, and then pleasant and painful. Assuming this, let us go on to say that a man does evil knowing that he does evil. But some one will ask, Why? Because he is overcome, is the



first answer. And by what is he overcome? the enquirer will proceed to ask. And we shall not be able to reply 'By pleasure,' for the name of pleasure has been exchanged for that of good. In our answer, then, we shall only say that he is overcome. 'By what?' he will reiterate. By the good, we shall have to reply; indeed we shall. Nay, but our questioner will rejoin with a laugh, if he be one of the swaggering sort, 'That is too ridiculous, that a man should do what he knows to be evil when he ought not, because he is overcome by good. Is that, he will ask, because the good was worthy or not worthy of conquering the evil'? And in answer to that we shall clearly reply, Because it was not worthy; for if it had been worthy, then he who, as we say, was overcome by pleasure, would not have been wrong. 'But how,' he will reply, 'can the good be unworthy of the evil, or the evil of the good'? Is not the real explanation that they are out of proportion to one another, either as greater and smaller, or more and fewer? This we cannot deny. And when you speak of being overcome—'what do you mean,' he will say, 'but that you choose the greater evil in exchange for the lesser good?' Admitted. And now substitute the names of pleasure and pain for good and evil, and say, not as before, that a man does what is evil knowingly, but that he does what is painful knowingly, and because he is overcome by pleasure, which is unworthy to overcome. What measure is there of the relations of pleasure to pain other than excess and defect, which means that they become greater and smaller, and more and fewer, and differ in degree? For if any one says: 'Yes, Socrates, but immediate pleasure differs widely from future pleasure and pain'—To that I should reply: And do they differ in anything but in pleasure and pain? There can be no other measure of them. And do you, like a skilful weigher, put into the balance the pleasures and the pains, and their nearness and distance, and weigh them, and then say which outweighs the other. If you weigh pleasures against pleasures, you of course take the more and greater; or if you weigh pains against pains, you take the fewer and the less; or if pleasures against pains, then you choose that course of action in which the painful is exceeded by the pleasant, whether the distant by the near or the near by the distant; and you avoid that course of action in which the pleasant is exceeded by the painful. Would you not admit, my friends, that this is true? I am confident that they cannot deny this.

He agreed with me.

Well then, I shall say, if you agree so far, be so good as to answer me a question: Do not the same magnitudes appear larger to your sight when near, and smaller when at a distance? They will acknowledge that. And the same holds of thickness and number; also sounds, which are in themselves equal, are greater when near, and lesser when at a distance. They will grant that also. Now suppose happiness to consist in doing or choosing the greater, and in not doing or in avoiding the less, what would be the saving principle of human life? Would not the art of measuring be the saving principle; or would the power of appearance? Is not the latter that deceiving art which makes us wander up and down and take the things at one time of which we repent at another, both in our actions and in our choice of things great and small? But the art of measurement would do away with the effect of appearances, and, showing the truth, would fain teach the soul at last to find rest in the truth, and would thus



save our life. Would not mankind generally acknowledge that the art which accomplishes this result is the art of measurement?

Yes, he said, the art of measurement.

Suppose, again, the salvation of human life to depend on the choice of odd and even, and on the knowledge of when a man ought to choose the greater or less, either in reference to themselves or to each other, and whether near or at a distance; what would be the saving principle of our lives? Would not knowledge?—a knowledge of measuring, when the question is one of excess and defect, and a knowledge of number, when the question is of odd and even? The world will assent, will they not?

Protagoras himself thought that they would.

Well then, my friends, I say to them; seeing that the salvation of human life has been found to consist in the right choice of pleasures and pains,—in the choice of the more and the fewer, and the greater and the less, and the nearer and remoter, must not this measuring be a consideration of their excess and defect and equality in relation to each other?

This is undeniably true.

And this, as possessing measure, must undeniably also be an art and science?

They will agree, he said.

The nature of that art or science will be a matter of future consideration; but the existence of such a science furnishes a demonstrative answer to the question which you asked of me and Protagoras. At the time when you asked the question, if you remember, both of us were agreeing that there was nothing mightier than knowledge, and that knowledge, in whatever existing, must have the advantage over pleasure and all other things; and then you said that pleasure often got the advantage even over a man who has knowledge; and we refused to allow this, and you rejoined: O Protagoras and Socrates, what is the meaning of being overcome by pleasure if not this?—tell us what you call such a state:—if we had immediately and at the time answered 'Ignorance,' you would have laughed at us. But now, in laughing at us, you will be laughing at yourselves: for you also admitted that men err in their choice of pleasures and pains; that is, in their choice of good and evil, from defect of knowledge; and you admitted further, that they err, not only from defect of knowledge in general, but of that particular knowledge which is called measuring. And you are also aware that the erring act which is done without knowledge is done in ignorance. This, therefore, is the meaning of being overcome by pleasure;—ignorance, and that the greatest. And our friends Protagoras and Prodicus and Hippias declare that they are the physicians of ignorance; but you, who are under the mistaken impression that ignorance is not the cause, and that the art of which I am speaking cannot be taught, neither go yourselves, nor send your children, to the Sophists, who are the teachers of these things—you take care of your money and give them none; and the result is, that you are the worse off both in public and private life:—Let us suppose this to be our answer to the world in general: And now I should like to ask you, Hippias, and you, Prodicus, as well as Protagoras (for the argument is to be yours as well as ours), whether you think that I am speaking the truth or not?

They all thought that what I said was entirely true.



Then you agree, I said, that the pleasant is the good, and the painful evil. And here I would beg my friend Prodicus not to introduce his distinction of names, whether he is disposed to say pleasurable, delightful, joyful. However, by whatever name he prefers to call them, I will ask you, most excellent Prodicus, to answer in my sense of the words.

Prodicus laughed and assented, as did the others.

Then, my friends, what do you say to this? Are not all actions honourable and useful, of which the tendency is to make life painless and pleasant? The honourable work is also useful and good?

This was admitted.

Then, I said, if the pleasant is the good, nobody does anything under the idea or conviction that some other thing would be better and is also attainable, when he might do the better. And this inferiority of a man to himself is merely ignorance, as the superiority of a man to himself is wisdom.

They all assented.

And is not ignorance the having a false opinion and being deceived about important matters?

To this also they unanimously assented.

Then, I said, no man voluntarily pursues evil, or that which he thinks to be evil. To prefer evil to good is not in human nature; and when a man is compelled to choose one of two evils, no one will choose the greater when he may have the less.

All of us agreed to every word of this.

Well, I said, there is a certain thing called fear or terror; and here, Prodicus, I should particularly like to know whether you would agree with me in defining this fear or terror as expectation of evil.

Protagoras and Hippias agreed, but Prodicus said that this was fear and not terror.

Never mind, Prodicus, I said; but let me ask whether, if our former assertions are true, a man will pursue that which he fears when he is not compelled? Would not this be in flat contradiction to the admission which has been already made, that he thinks the things which he fears to be evil; and no one will pursue or voluntarily accept that which he thinks to be evil?

That also was universally admitted.

Then, I said, these, Hippias and Prodicus, are our premises; and I would beg Protagoras to explain to us how he can be right in what he said at first. I do not mean in what he said quite at first, for his first statement, as you may remember, was that whereas there were five parts of virtue none of them was like any other of them; each of them had a separate function. To this, however, I am not referring, but to the assertion which he afterwards made that of the five virtues four were nearly akin to each other, but that the fifth, which was courage, differed greatly from the others. And of this he gave me the following proof. He said: You will find, Socrates, that some of the most impious, and unrighteous, and intemperate, and ignorant of men are among the most courageous; which proves that courage is very different from the other parts of virtue. I was surprised at his saying this at the time,



and I am still more surprised now that I have discussed the matter with you. So I asked him whether by the brave he meant the confident. Yes, he replied, and the impetuous or goers. (You may remember, Protagoras, that this was your answer.)

He assented.

Well then, I said, tell us against what are the courageous ready to go—against the same dangers as the cowards?

No, he answered.

Then against something different?

Yes, he said.

Then do cowards go where there is safety, and the courageous where there is danger?

Yes, Socrates, so men say.

Very true, I said. But I want to know against what do you say that the courageous are ready to go—against dangers, believing them to be dangers, or not against dangers?

No, said he; the former case has been proved by you in the previous argument to be impossible.

That, again, I replied, is quite true. And if this has been rightly proven, then no one goes to meet what he thinks to be dangers, since the want of self-control, which makes men rush into dangers, has been shown to be ignorance.

He assented.

And yet the courageous man and the coward alike go to meet that about which they are confident; so that, in this point of view, the cowardly and the courageous go to meet the same things.

And yet, Socrates, said Protagoras, that to which the coward goes is the opposite of that to which the courageous goes; the one, for example, is ready to go to battle, and the other is not ready.

And is going to battle honourable or disgraceful? I said.

Honourable, he replied.

And if honourable, then already admitted by us to be good; for all honourable actions we have admitted to be good.

That is true; and to that opinion I shall always adhere.

True, I said. But which of the two are they who, as you say, are unwilling to go to war, which is a good and honourable thing?

The cowards, he replied.

And what is good and honourable, I said, is also pleasant?

It has certainly been acknowledged to be so, he replied.

And do the cowards knowingly refuse to go to the nobler, and pleasanter, and better?

The admission of that, he replied, would belie our former admissions.

But does not the courageous man also go to meet the better, and pleasanter, and nobler?

That must be admitted.

And the courageous man has no base fear or base confidence?



True, he replied.

And if not base, then honourable?

He admitted this.

And if honourable, then good?

Yes.

But the fear and confidence of the coward or foolhardy or madman, on the contrary, are base?

He assented.

And these base fears and confidences originate in ignorance and uninstructedness?

True, he said.

Then as to the motive from which the cowards act, do you call it cowardice or courage?

I should say cowardice, he replied.

And have they not been shown to be cowards through their ignorance of dangers?

Assuredly, he said.

And because of that ignorance they are cowards?

He assented.

And the reason why they are cowards is admitted by you to be cowardice?

He again assented.

Then the ignorance of what is and is not dangerous is cowardice?

He nodded assent.

But surely courage, I said, is opposed to cowardice?

Yes.

Then the wisdom which knows what are and are not dangers is opposed to the ignorance of them?

To that again he nodded assent.

And the ignorance of them is cowardice?

To that he very reluctantly nodded assent.

And the knowledge of that which is and is not dangerous is courage, and is opposed to the ignorance of these things?

At this point he would no longer nod assent, but was silent.

And why, I said, do you neither assent nor dissent, Protagoras?

Finish the argument by yourself, he said.

I only want to ask one more question, I said. I want to know whether you still think that there are men who are most ignorant and yet most courageous?

You seem to have a great ambition to make me answer, Socrates, and therefore I will gratify you, and say, that this appears to me to be impossible consistently with the argument.

My only object, I said, in continuing the discussion, has been the desire to ascertain the nature and relations of virtue; for if this were clear, I am very sure that the other controversy which has been carried on at great length by both of us—you affirming and I denying



that virtue can be taught—would also become clear. The result of our discussion appears to me to be singular. For if the argument had a human voice, that voice would be heard laughing at us and saying: 'Protagoras and Socrates, you are strange beings; there are you, Socrates, who were saying that virtue cannot be taught, contradicting yourself now by your attempt to prove that all things are knowledge, including justice, and temperance, and courage,—which tends to show that virtue can certainly be taught; for if virtue were other than knowledge, as Protagoras attempted to prove, then clearly virtue cannot be taught; but if virtue is entirely knowledge, as you are seeking to show, then I cannot but suppose that virtue is capable of being taught. Protagoras, on the other hand, who started by saying that it might be taught, is now eager to prove it to be anything rather than knowledge; and if this is true, it must be quite incapable of being taught.' Now I, Protagoras, perceiving this terrible confusion of our ideas, have a great desire that they should be cleared up. And I should like to carry on the discussion until we ascertain what virtue is, whether capable of being taught or not, lest haply Epimetheus should trip us up and deceive us in the argument, as he forgot us in the story; I prefer your Prometheus to your Epimetheus, for of him I make use, whenever I am busy about these questions, in Promethean care of my own life. And if you have no objection, as I said at first, I should like to have your help in the enquiry.

Protagoras replied: Socrates, I am not of a base nature, and I am the last man in the world to be envious. I cannot but applaud your energy and your conduct of an argument. As I have often said, I admire you above all men whom I know, and far above all men of your age; and I believe that you will become very eminent in philosophy. Let us come back to the subject at some future time; at present we had better turn to something else.

By all means, I said, if that is your wish; for I too ought long since to have kept the engagement of which I spoke before, and only tarried because I could not refuse the request of the noble Callias. So the conversation ended, and we went our way.





4. Introduction to Plato's *Republic*

The *Republic* is a complex dialogue, in which Plato advances and ties together a number of distinct but intertwined philosophical theories. It is a colossal undertaking, the historical importance of which is not diminished by the fact that both its metaphysical and its ethical and political doctrines are demonstrably untenable.

The *Republic* includes an ontological theory and a theory of knowledge (together they constitute Plato's metaphysics), an ethical theory, a political one, a complex moral psychology scheme, a theory of education and a theory of art.

In this chapter, we will discuss Plato's metaphysical construction, the so-called theory of the Forms. Plato believes that all human knowledge is *a priori*, meaning that it comes before sense experience. Our souls, which are separable from our bodies, spend the time between their successive entrances into bodies in the 'realm of the Forms'. This realm consists of the gods, the souls and the Forms. The Forms are what may be called 'universals' or concepts. Plato asserts, for example, that in order for someone to be able to recognize and correctly identify a table (and not to confuse it with, say, a coach), one must know the Form of the table first. But only very few people, the philosophers, ever achieve knowledge of the Forms. The rest go about by using their 'opinions', which are unreliable.

Since all souls lose their previous knowledge at birth, the 'recollection' of this knowledge is the ultimate aim of the philosopher. A life of abstention from bodily pleasures and intense study of philosophy and mathematics is presupposed for the soul to 'recollect' what it knew before. But even such a life is no guarantee of success. Ultimately, achieving knowledge of the Forms is a mystical experience which cannot be completely rationalized.

Plato's theory attempts to explain where our knowledge comes from, as well as how it is possible to know for certain that the object in front of me is a table and not a T-Rex. In the part of the *Republic* that follows, Plato tries to establish that there is a realm of the Forms and a realm of particular, sensible things (the physical world), by arguing that the Forms are the object of knowledge and particular things the object of opinion and that these two realms are separate.

Plato's theory of the Forms was devastatingly criticized by Aristotle and was never accepted in its entirety by any philosopher after that. The main problems are that for the theory to work Plato must make the 'Form of the table' completely independent of any particular table and that only the Forms fully exist, whereas material things come between existence and non-existence. Both claims are very strongly counterintuitive.





Republic

Book V (473C-480A)

Plato

Translated by Benjamin Jowett

I said: Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils,—nor the human race, as I believe,—and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day. Such was the thought, my dear Glaucon, which I would fain have uttered if it had not seemed too extravagant; for to be convinced that in no other State can there be happiness private or public is indeed a hard thing.

Socrates, what do you mean? I would have you consider that the word which you have uttered is one at which numerous persons, and very respectable persons too, in a figure pulling off their coats all in a moment, and seizing any weapon that comes to hand, will run at you might and main, before you know where you are, intending to do heaven knows what; and if you don't prepare an answer, and put yourself in motion, you will be prepared by their fine wits,' and no mistake.

You got me into the scrape, I said.

And I was quite right; however, I will do all I can to get you out of it; but I can only give you good-will and good advice, and, perhaps, I may be able to fit answers to your questions better than another—that is all. And now, having such an auxiliary, you must do your best to show the unbelievers that you are right. I ought to try, I said, since you offer me such invaluable assistance. And I think that, if there is to be a chance of our escaping, we must explain to them whom we mean when we say that philosophers are to rule in the State; then we shall be able to defend ourselves: There will be discovered to be some natures who ought to study philosophy and to be leaders in the State; and others who are not born to be philosophers, and are meant to be followers rather than leaders.

Then now for a definition, he said.

Follow me, I said, and I hope that I may in some way or other be able to give you a satisfactory explanation.

Proceed.

I dare say that you remember, and therefore I need not remind you, that a lover, if he is worthy of the name, ought to show his love, not to some one part of that which he loves, but to the whole.

I really do not understand, and therefore beg of you to assist my memory.

Another person, I said, might fairly reply as you do; but a man of pleasure like yourself ought to know that all who are in the flower of youth do somehow or other raise a pang or emotion in a lover's breast, and are thought by him to be worthy of his affectionate regards. Is not this a way which you have with the fair: one has a snub nose, and you praise his charming face; the hook-nose of another has, you say, a royal look; while he who is neither snub nor hooked has the grace of regularity: the dark visage is manly, the fair are children of the gods; and as to the sweet 'honey pale,' as they are called, what is the very name but the invention of a lover who talks in diminutives, and is not adverse to paleness if appearing on the cheek of youth? In a word, there is no excuse which you will not make, and nothing which you will not say, in order not to lose a single flower that blooms in the spring-time of youth.

If you make me an authority in matters of love, for the sake of the argument, I assent.

And what do you say of lovers of wine? Do you not see them doing the same? They are glad of any pretext of drinking any wine.

Very good.

And the same is true of ambitious men; if they cannot command an army, they are willing to command a file; and if they cannot be honoured by really great and important persons, they are glad to be honoured by lesser and meaner people, but honour of some kind they must have.

Exactly.

Once more let me ask: Does he who desires any class of goods, desire the whole class or a part only?

The whole.

And may we not say of the philosopher that he is a lover, not of a part of wisdom only, but of the whole?

Yes, of the whole.

And he who dislikes learnings, especially in youth, when he has no power of judging what is good and what is not, such an one we maintain not to be a philosopher or a lover of knowledge, just as he who refuses his food is not hungry, and may be said to have a bad appetite and not a good one?

Very true, he said.

Whereas he who has a taste for every sort of knowledge and who is curious to learn and is never satisfied, may be justly termed a philosopher? Am I not right?

Glaucon said: If curiosity makes a philosopher, you will find many a strange being will have a title to the name. All the lovers of sights have a delight in learning, and must therefore be included. Musical amateurs, too, are a folk strangely out of place among phi-



losophers, for they are the last persons in the world who would come to anything like a philosophical discussion, if they could help, while they run about at the Dionysiac festivals as if they had let out their ears to hear every chorus; whether the performance is in town or country—that makes no difference—they are there. Now are we to maintain that all these and any who have similar tastes, as well as the professors of quite minor arts, are philosophers?

Certainly not, I replied; they are only an imitation.

He said: Who then are the true philosophers?

Those, I said, who are lovers of the vision of truth.

That is also good, he said; but I should like to know what you mean?

To another, I replied, I might have a difficulty in explaining; but I am sure that you will admit a proposition which I am about to make.

What is the proposition?

That since beauty is the opposite of ugliness, they are two?

Certainly.

And inasmuch as they are two, each of them is one?

True again.

And of just and unjust, good and evil, and of every other class, the same remark holds: taken singly, each of them one; but from the various combinations of them with actions and things and with one another, they are seen in all sorts of lights and appear many? Very true.

And this is the distinction which I draw between the sight-loving, art-loving, practical class and those of whom I am speaking, and who are alone worthy of the name of philosophers.

How do you distinguish them? he said.

The lovers of sounds and sights, I replied, are, as I conceive, fond of fine tones and colours and forms and all the artificial products that are made out of them, but their mind is incapable of seeing or loving absolute beauty.

True, he replied.

Few are they who are able to attain to the sight of this.

Very true.

And he who, having a sense of beautiful things has no sense of absolute beauty, or who, if another lead him to a knowledge of that beauty is unable to follow—of such an one I ask, Is he awake or in a dream only? Reflect: is not the dreamer, sleeping or waking, one who likens dissimilar things, who puts the copy in the place of the real object?

I should certainly say that such an one was dreaming.

But take the case of the other, who recognises the existence of absolute beauty and is able to distinguish the idea from the objects which participate in the idea, neither putting the objects in the place of the idea nor the idea in the place of the objects—is he a dreamer, or is he awake?

He is wide awake.



And may we not say that the mind of the one who knows has knowledge, and that the mind of the other, who opines only, has opinion.

Certainly.

But suppose that the latter should quarrel with us and dispute our statement, can we administer any soothing cordial or advice to him, without revealing to him that there is sad disorder in his wits?

We must certainly offer him some good advice, he replied.

Come, then, and let us think of something to say to him. Shall we begin by assuring him that he is welcome to any knowledge which he may have, and that we are rejoiced at his having it? But we should like to ask him a question: Does he who has knowledge know something or nothing? (You must answer for him.)

I answer that he knows something.

Something that is or is not?

Something that is; for how can that which is not ever be known?

And are we assured, after looking at the matter from many points of view, that absolute being is or may be absolutely known, but that the utterly non-existent is utterly unknown?

Nothing can be more certain.

Good. But if there be anything which is of such a nature as to be and not to be, that will have a place intermediate between pure being and the absolute negation of being?

Yes, between them.

And, as knowledge corresponded to being and ignorance of necessity to not-being, for that intermediate between being and not-being there has to be discovered a corresponding intermediate between ignorance and knowledge, if there be such?

Certainly.

Do we admit the existence of opinion?

Undoubtedly.

As being the same with knowledge, or another faculty?

Another faculty.

Then opinion and knowledge have to do with different kinds of matter corresponding to this difference of faculties?

Yes.

And knowledge is relative to being and knows being. But before I proceed further I will make a division.

What division?

I will begin by placing faculties in a class by themselves: they are powers in us, and in all other things, by which we do as we do. Sight and hearing, for example, I should call faculties. Have I clearly explained the class which I mean?

Yes, I quite understand.

Then let me tell you my view about them. I do not see them, and therefore the distinctions of fire, colour, and the like, which enable me to discern the differences of some things,



do not apply to them. In speaking of a faculty I think only of its sphere and its result; and that which has the same sphere and the same result I call the same faculty, but that which has another sphere and another result I call different. Would that be your way of speaking?

Yes.

And will you be so very good as to answer one more question? Would you say that knowledge is a faculty, or in what class would you place it?

Certainly knowledge is a faculty, and the mightiest of all faculties.

And is opinion also a faculty?

Certainly, he said; for opinion is that with which we are able to form an opinion.

And yet you were acknowledging a little while ago that knowledge is not the same as opinion?

Why, yes, he said: how can any reasonable being ever identify that which is infallible with that which errs?

An excellent answer, proving, I said, that we are quite conscious of a distinction between them.

Yes.

Then knowledge and opinion having distinct powers have also distinct spheres or subject-matters?

That is certain.

Being is the sphere or subject-matter of knowledge, and knowledge is to know the nature of being?

Yes.

And opinion is to have an opinion?

Yes.

And do we know what we opine? or is the subject-matter of opinion the same as the subject-matter of knowledge?

Nay, he replied, that has been already disproven; if difference in faculty implies difference in the sphere or subject matter, and if, as we were saying, opinion and knowledge are distinct faculties, then the sphere of knowledge and of opinion cannot be the same.

Then if being is the subject-matter of knowledge, something else must be the subject-matter of opinion?

Yes, something else.

Well then, is not-being the subject-matter of opinion? or, rather, how can there be an opinion at all about not-being? Reflect: when a man has an opinion, has he not an opinion about something? Can he have an opinion which is an opinion about nothing?

Impossible.

He who has an opinion has an opinion about some one thing?

Yes.

And not-being is not one thing but, properly speaking, nothing?

True.



Of not-being, ignorance was assumed to be the necessary correlative; of being, knowledge?

True, he said.

Then opinion is not concerned either with being or with not-being?

Not with either.

And can therefore neither be ignorance nor knowledge?

That seems to be true.

But is opinion to be sought without and beyond either of them, in a greater clearness than knowledge, or in a greater darkness than ignorance?

In neither.

Then I suppose that opinion appears to you to be darker than knowledge, but lighter than ignorance?

Both; and in no small degree.

And also to be within and between them?

Yes.

Then you would infer that opinion is intermediate?

No question.

But were we not saying before, that if anything appeared to be of a sort which is and is not at the same time, that sort of thing would appear also to lie in the interval between pure being and absolute not-being; and that the corresponding faculty is neither knowledge nor ignorance, but will be found in the interval between them?

True.

And in that interval there has now been discovered something which we call opinion?

There has.

Then what remains to be discovered is the object which partakes equally of the nature of being and not-being, and cannot rightly be termed either, pure and simple; this unknown term, when discovered, we may truly call the subject of opinion, and assign each to its proper faculty,—the extremes to the faculties of the extremes and the mean to the faculty of the mean.

True.

This being premised, I would ask the gentleman who is of opinion that there is no absolute or unchangeable idea of beauty—in whose opinion the beautiful is the manifold—he, I say, your lover of beautiful sights, who cannot bear to be told that the beautiful is one, and the just is one, or that anything is one—to him I would appeal, saying, Will you be so very kind, sir, as to tell us whether, of all these beautiful things, there is one which will not be found ugly; or of the just, which will not be found unjust; or of the holy, which will not also be unholy?

No, he replied; the beautiful will in some point of view be found ugly; and the same is true of the rest.

And may not the many which are doubles be also halves?—doubles, that is, of one thing, and halves of another?



Quite true.

And things great and small, heavy and light, as they are termed, will not be denoted by these any more than by the opposite names?

True; both these and the opposite names will always attach to all of them.

And can any one of those many things which are called by particular names be said to be this rather than not to be this?

He replied: They are like the punning riddles which are asked at feasts or the children's puzzle about the eunuch aiming at the bat, with what he hit him, as they say in the puzzle, and upon what the bat was sitting. The individual objects of which I am speaking are also a riddle, and have a double sense: nor can you fix them in your mind, either as being or not-being, or both, or neither.

Then what will you do with them? I said. Can they have a better place than between being and not-being? For they are clearly not in greater darkness or negation than not-being, or more full of light and existence than being.

That is quite true, he said.

Thus then we seem to have discovered that the many ideas which the multitude entertain about the beautiful and about all other things are tossing about in some region which is halfway between pure being and pure not-being?

We have.

Yes; and we had before agreed that anything of this kind which we might find was to be described as matter of opinion, and not as matter of knowledge; being the intermediate flux which is caught and detained by the intermediate faculty.

Quite true.

Then those who see the many beautiful, and who yet neither see absolute beauty, nor can follow any guide who points the way thither; who see the many just, and not absolute justice, and the like,—such persons may be said to have opinion but not knowledge?

That is certain.

But those who see the absolute and eternal and immutable may be said to know, and not to have opinion only?

Neither can that be denied.

The one loves and embraces the subjects of knowledge, the other those of opinion? The latter are the same, as I dare say will remember, who listened to sweet sounds and gazed upon fair colours, but would not tolerate the existence of absolute beauty.

Yes, I remember.

Shall we then be guilty of any impropriety in calling them lovers of opinion rather than lovers of wisdom, and will they be very angry with us for thus describing them?

I shall tell them not to be angry; no man should be angry at what is true.

But those who love the truth in each thing are to be called lovers of wisdom and not lovers of opinion.

Assuredly.







5. Introduction to *Plato on Democracy*

In this chapter from my book *Plato on Democracy* I analyze the political and the moral psychology theories of the *Republic*. I conclude that Plato's overall argument does not work even on its own terms.

Plato posits three classes in the *Republic*: Guardians (philosopher-rulers), Auxiliaries (the armed forces of the city) and Producers. He asserts that there are four virtues and that our souls are tripartite. They have a rational, a spirited and a desiring, irrational part.

The Guardians and the Auxiliaries together are leisured classes who correspond to the aristocrats in the historical world of Classical Greece. The Producers correspond to the lower classes of laboring citizens.

Plato's moral psychology is anchored on the assertion that the rational part dominates the soul of the Guardians, the spirited part the soul of the Auxiliaries, and the desiring part the soul of the Producers. This psychological profile works very well in terms of justifying the political authority of the Guardians, who rule the city, and the political impotence of the Producers, whose irrationality means that they should not have an active political role.

The problem with this grand scheme, however, is that Plato expects the Producers to obey the Guardians willingly and unwaveringly. But, as I show through detailed discussion of the relevant passages, it is not possible to expect the Producers to behave in this way. If they are the irrational individuals that Plato's moral theory has suggested, how can they act rationally in politics and accept the philosophers' rule? On the other hand, if they are not completely dominated by their desires and have enough rationality to obey the Guardians willingly, why completely denude them of any vestige of political self-determination?

Either the Producers are absolutely irrational and thus cannot be trusted to follow the Guardians, or they are rational enough to obey, but, precisely because of their rationality, they ought to have some political

role, however limited. Plato's failure to appreciate this point entails one of two things: either the Producers are to some extent rational, in which case they are wrongfully deprived of some degree of political participation, or they are not rational at all, in which case they cannot be trusted to obey the philosophers and the only way that the best possible constitution can be maintained is by force. But although Plato explicitly sanctions the use of force against the Producers, the dictatorial character of this rule would make his city as unacceptable to his contemporaries as it ought to be to liberals today.





Plato on Democracy

Thanassis Samaras

The challenge to which Socrates responds in the *Republic* is set in Book One by Thrasymachus, who argues that the unjust individual is happier than the just. In his endeavour to disprove this thesis, Socrates begins by proposing justice to be sought first in the city, because there it exists on a 'larger' scale (368e). He suggests that the first *polis* is created because everyone is 'not self-sufficient, but has many needs which he can't supply himself' (369b). Division of labour produces efficiency (369e–370a) and conforms to the fact that each individual is by nature suited to do a certain job (370a–b). As more production needs arise, more people are required for different jobs to be done and the city grows (370d ff.). Its people, in Socrates' description, have only the bare essentials for a simple life. This invites Glaucon to complain that Socrates is talking of a city of pigs (372d). Socrates responds that the city so far described is 'healthy' (372e7), whereas the 'luxurious' (372e3) one that Glaucon wants will be 'suffering from inflammation' (372e8).¹

There are two points worth making about the 'city of pigs'. First, Plato realises with exceptional acuteness that a city starts as an economic association destined to provide for the needs of its members. In order for this to happen more efficiently, the philosopher claims, distribution of labour has to come into effect and this is actually a good thing not only in economic terms (because it produces more efficiency, 369e–370a), but also in terms of human self-fulfilment (because it is obviously best for every individual to do the job he or she was destined to do by nature, 370a–b). This economic insight, which demonstrates Plato's clear understanding of the significance of the division of labour, coupled with his assumption that an individual is by nature best suited to do one job, play a crucial part in the formation of the social structure of Callipolis.

Second, as some commentators have pointed out, it is this germinal city which is Plato's 'ideal' city and not Callipolis which is often so described.² The primitive community is indeed 'ideal' in that it does not include, in its initial stages, the features of Plato's contemporary societies which lead to divisions between individuals, factions and cities. But Plato realises that such a situation without any conflict bears no resemblance to the political realities of his time. In a community which is *a priori* peaceful, politics does not apply, because politics is primarily concerned with the restriction or elimination of conflict.³ So, Plato's proto-community might be 'ideal', but, unlike the city of the *Republic*, it is ideal on a non-political plane.

The desire for luxury in this primitive city leads to a point where its own land is not sufficient to sustain its people and it ends up going to war with its neighbours (373d).⁴ At this point the necessity of an army presents itself. This army, according to Socrates, must be professional.⁵ It is with the discussion of the character required for the soldiers and the education which they receive that the description of the Platonic 'just city' eventually begins.

The city is divided into three classes: the Guardians (*phylakes*), who come out of the soldierly class as its oldest and most competent members and become the rulers of the city; the Auxiliaries, who constitute the rest of the soldierly class (the term *phylakes* is introduced in 374d8 and is used to designate the professional soldiers up to 414b5, where the distinction between rulers and soldiers, the latter now called *epikouroi*, is introduced. From then on the two terms are used in a specific technical sense); the third class is not ascribed a specific name by Plato. He refers to them by different names like 'workers' (421d1), 'the other citizens' [Guardians and Auxiliaries excluded] (423d3) or 'businessmen' (434c7). This Platonic failure to name this class consistently is indicative of Plato's lack of interest in them, which is further demonstrated by the fact that he devotes large parts of the *Republic* to the specification of the education of the Auxiliaries (376c–412b) and the Guardians (502e–541b), but never supplies a single word about the formal education of the Producers.

The city is wise, for Plato, not due to the wisdom of its craftsmen (428b–c), but due to the knowledge which is concerned with the benefit of the city as a whole; the latter belongs to the Guardians, a class by nature consisting of very few members (428e9–429a1).⁶ The Guardians are, according to Plato, the only class that places the overall interest of the city above its individual class interest. The philosopher's insistence that very few individuals will achieve wisdom, the cardinal virtue which legitimises power, is not only one feature of his theory of virtue, but a key element of his political doctrine as well. If wisdom is rare, the political virtue which is grounded on it will also be a highly exclusive quality. In terms of the development of Plato's thought, this position springs directly from Socrates' emphasis on the importance of expertise in politics and is self-evidently anti-democratic.⁷

The city is brave by virtue of the courageous behaviour not of all its citizens, but only of those who have to perform military duty (429b), i.e. the Auxiliaries. This courageous behaviour consists in having an unshakeable right opinion (430b3) as to what is to be feared and what not, which is imparted into their souls by the education that was prescribed for them in 376c ff.

Temperance is a blend of 'concord' (430e3) and 'harmony' (430e4). This 'concord' and 'harmony' consist in an agreement that the best ought to rule over the worst (432a). Justice is declared to be 'in a certain sense' (433b3) for each 'to mind his own business' (433b4). It is also what 'makes it possible for them [the other virtues] to come into being . . . and preserves them' (433b) and what makes the city 'perfectly good'⁸ (433d). Finally, one brief argument is added to demonstrate why 'to mind one's own business' is a good definition of justice. The role of the courts, which in the just city are to be manned by the rulers, is to give everybody what is due to him or her and this is just (433e–434a).



The definitions of the four virtues of the city hereby summarised have to be regarded as, in a sense, provisional. A full account of wisdom can be produced only after the introduction of the philosopher and the meaning of justice is not fully elaborated until the end of Book Nine. But they are of great importance in that they provide the first explicit formulation of Plato's theory of virtue and, from a political point of view, because they are specifically definitions of the virtues of the *polis*.

Nevertheless, Plato's definition of the city's virtues is not free of problems. One such problem is the philosopher's perplexing belief that the virtues cannot be more or less than four. When wisdom, bravery and temperance have been defined, Socrates asserts that 'what remains' is justice (432b). But Plato has nowhere given the slightest indication that the virtues must necessarily be four and a serious gap appears in his argument on this point. Cross and Woosley characterise this argument by elimination as a 'worthless procedure'.⁹

A more serious question arises with regard to Plato's judicial argument. In fact, an obvious fallacy is involved if the latter is taken in its literal form. The first premise is that the judges ought to make sure that everybody gets what is his or her own. Since the judges aim at justice, it follows that it is just that everybody should have his or her own. So far Plato's reasoning is faultless. But Plato claims that his premises prove not only that it is just that one should have one's own, but also that one should do one's own. However, the premises state nothing about one doing one's own and the argument cannot be accepted in this form.

Vlastos has argued that this fallacy is too gross to have gone unnoticed by Plato and that the argument is in fact elliptical. There is an unstated premise which is that 'each shall have one's own if each does one's own'.¹⁰ According to Vlastos, this argument represents a Platonic attempt to connect the particular notion of justice proposed in the *Republic* (which might be called Platonic justice) with the common conception of justice (ordinary justice). Vlastos asserts that the argument includes a specific attempt to show that Platonic justice, exactly like ordinary justice, involves refraining from Πλεονεξία (having more than one is due) and that Plato can expect agreement from common opinion on this point. Treated this way, Vlastos suggests, the argument is valid and does establish the correspondence between Platonic and ordinary morality that the philosopher aims at: Plato is counting on his readers 'to understand his definition to imply that in any community in which everyone lived up to the maxim "do your own" there would be no *pleonexia*'.¹¹ Vlastos's point about *pleonexia* is plausible: the statement that 'men should not take other people's belongings or be deprived of their own' (433e), to which he draws attention, does read as an expression of what an ordinary Greek would understand by *pleonexia*.

Read as elliptical in this manner, Plato's argument is in fact formally valid. There is, however, one question which remains to be asked: does the hidden premise that each shall have one's own if and only if one does one's own establish a connection between Platonic and ordinary justice? In other words, would such a correspondence be recognisable in any Greek society? If not, Plato cannot claim to have succeeded in connecting the *Republic's* morality to common morality, because even if there were general agreement that justice



consists in refraining from *pleonexia*, there would be no similar agreement that to have one's own is equivalent to doing one's own.

The bi-conditional relation between 'having' and 'doing' one's own, which Vlastos asserts, means in socio-political terms that one's property should be related to one's social status and/or one's function in the state. In Plato's city, which is rigidly stratified, this condition is, indeed, satisfied (it is satisfied not in the sense that the highest classes have more possessions, but in the sense that, as we will see in chapter 3, they control economic power by commanding the labour of others). But in the real world, though this principle might partially apply to some strict oligarchies like Sparta, it hardly applies to societies where economic power is not exclusively concentrated in the hands of the classes traditionally regarded as the highest ones. In Athens, for example, a metic could be extremely rich, but still be excluded from participation in common affairs. But we have no evidence that the Greeks considered this asymmetry between one's property and one's social status as unjust. Therefore, Plato's equivalence of having and doing one's own cannot be accepted as a point on which he could justifiably expect general agreement and this invalidates the claim that by his judicial argument he establishes a full rapport between his own and the common conception of justice. It is fair enough to say that he uses a commonly accepted notion of justice (as entailing rejection of *pleonexia*), but it is far from certain that he can achieve universal agreement for his equivocation between having one's own and doing one's own. This fact does not entail that Vlastos's addition of a suppressed premise in order to save Plato's argument at the formal level is unsound: this move remains both tenable and plausible. It indicates, however, a serious unresolved problem in Plato's account of justice in the city.¹²

One cardinal characteristic of Plato's theory of virtue, and a vital one from a political point of view, is that no specific virtue is attributed to the Producers and that the potentiality to achieve virtue, rather than any fully developed particular virtue, is attributed to the Auxiliaries. The city derives its wisdom from the wisdom of its Guardians and Plato leaves no doubt that wisdom is the 'property' of individual Guardians (428d and e). The latter are also brave, and brave on a higher plane than the Auxiliaries, because they start their careers as Auxiliaries and are accepted into the highest class by virtue of being distinguished in their soldierly duties as well as by coming eventually to possess full knowledge as opposed to the Auxiliaries' right opinion. The Auxiliaries do demonstrate bravery, but, as will soon be explained, they do not 'possess' this virtue in the strict sense of the word. As for temperance and justice, Plato defines them not as properties of particular classes, in which case they would be attributed to all the individuals of these classes, but as relations between classes. In this way he is able to include the Producers in the political framework of the *Republic* without being obliged to allow them any claim to virtue.

The case of temperance is particularly interesting in this respect, because Plato's presentation of it involves a deep-seated ambiguity. If temperance, whose essence is that rulers and ruled agree about who must govern, is a kind of 'concord' (430e), then by implication the Producers should have at least some degree of freedom and rationality. They should have



freedom because their consent would become a substantial part of the justification of the Guardians' rule, and they should have rationality because this is essential for their recognition of the 'natural' (431c, 432a) superiority of the Guardians. Plato also writes that temperance 'exists among [both] the rulers and the ruled' (431e). *Eneinai*, the verb used in this sentence, literally means 'to exist in' them; it appears then that Plato comes close here to attributing temperance to the Producers as individuals.¹³

Nevertheless, as Irwin remarks, Plato's language here can be misleading:

[i]n a temperate state (a) the same belief about who should rule *enestin* in rulers and ruled, 431a9; (b) this concord about who should rule is temperance, 432a4; (c) the state's temperance, unlike its wisdom and courage is not *en merei tini* of the state, 431e10, but is spread through the whole city, 432a2. These uses of *en* might mislead us into thinking all the individuals are temperate . . . But Plato says only that all the classes in the state contribute to the state's temperance, which implies nothing about the temperance of individuals.¹⁴

This interpretation is supported by the fact that there is a decisively darker side to Plato's psychological treatment of the Producers: 'the greatest number and variety of desires and pleasures and pains is generally to be found in children and women and slaves, and in the less respectable majority of free men',¹⁵ the philosopher writes in 431b–c. In the psychological and sociological typology of the *Republic*, the 'majority of free men' corresponds of course to the Producers. The passage quoted occurs in the context of the examination of temperance in the city and thus its significance is not merely psychological, but political as well. What it underlines is the difficulty of making the Producers recognise the superiority of the Guardians. In order to achieve this, they have to overcome their deeply-rooted tendency to be dominated by their desires and pleasures. But this tendency, as we discover with the unfolding of Plato's psychology, is neither an accidental nor a peripheral element of their moral character; it is built into it as its most fundamental characteristic. This being the case, the rationality which they can demonstrate by their temperance can only be severely limited; and the freedom which is allowed them is not the substantial freedom of checking the Guardians' power, with the latter depending on their continuous consent, but rather the nominal freedom of accepting the Guardians' authority in an acquiescent way which, as Cross and Woollsey explain, does not necessarily involve real freedom:

[i]t is fairly clear that [Plato] regarded it as [the Producers'] business to stay in their place and get on with their jobs, leaving the job of government to better and wiser men. There is no suggestion that the Guardians rule because the Economic Class allow them to rule. It is not over-cynical to conclude that Plato thought it was more important that the most competent men should rule than that less competent men should have any say in deciding who should rule; and that the freedom accorded to the Economic Class was an exceedingly limited or even spurious freedom, the freedom which they would be allowed only for so long as they used it in the way which Plato wanted. There is very little doubt what would become of their freedom, if they showed any signs of getting out of line.¹⁶



The expression *ton eleutheron legomenon* (431c2) strongly supports this interpretation: literally, it means that common people are free in name only.

Leaving political freedom aside for a moment, one has to remark that psychological freedom is not attributed to the third class either. As Muller has shown, in the *Republic* Plato operates with a notion of freedom which involves the acceptance of the authority of reason and the absence of subordination to an external principle.¹⁷ But this type of freedom can only be achieved by those who conceive and comprehend reason, the philosopher-rulers. This is why Plato remarks in 590c that manual workers 'must be "enslaved" to the best man who has a divine ruler within himself'.¹⁸ As this passage demonstrates, all the attractive talk about concord notwithstanding, the third class remains ethically heteronomous and in constant need of moral control. The choice of 'slave', despite the very strong negative connotations of the word which would be immediately striking to the Greek reader, is indicative of Plato's refusal to take seriously the possibility of a moral autonomy—however limited—of the Producers. Significantly, this passage, to which we shall return soon, culminates with a reference to a rule and a concord (590d6) preserved by external force. It thus vindicates the interpretation that the Producers are invested neither with the virtue of temperance nor with political freedom, and, in consequence, that their freedom cannot be regarded as going beyond a passive acceptance—at the very best—of their betters' rule.

As for the rationality of the third class, it is in fact an open question whether in the framework of Plato's psychological scheme the Producers, who are by definition ruled by their desires, can display any rationality at all. Given the city-soul analogy (435b), appetite is the dominant element in their souls (see also 590c). In his definition of temperance in the soul, Plato claims that the latter will be temperate if the appetitive part is willingly subjected to the rule of reason (442c–d). But this presupposes the existence of a reasoning part within the appetitive part itself. Cross and Woosley argue that this is an untenable position, for attributing a reasoning part to the appetitive part can only be defended if one assigns 'to *each* of the elements of the soul three sub-elements of reason, spirit and appetite' and this 'would make nonsense of Plato's whole psychology, and it would lead to a vicious regress'.¹⁹ Strictly speaking, their claim is not true. Plato's argument does not lead necessarily to an infinite regress, because the argument does not require a multiplication of all of the three elements in each part of the soul. It only demands that the appetitive part is assigned a reasoning capacity and this could be considered a peculiar case.²⁰ But the authors are right in essence, because even if that much is conceded to Plato, his position remains untenable. In 436a ff., it is *exactly* the antithesis of desire and reason that Plato uses to posit different parts of the soul. This entails that the assumption of a rationally behaving appetitive part is absolutely incompatible with the way Plato's psychological model is set up, and can only lead to the collapse of this model. Given the distinction between reason and appetite in Book Four,²¹ an appetitive part ruled by a reasoning sub-part within it cannot be regarded as an appetitive part anymore. It is quite simply a contradiction in terms.²²



The core of Plato's problem is that, if the third class is irrational, there can be no possibility of harmony in his state, whereas if it is rational, even to a limited extent, its absolute exclusion from any form of political participation cannot be justified. The picture of an irrational third class is incompatible with the possibility of a harmonious state ruled by amicable agreement, because harmony depends on concord between the citizens and consent on the issue of who is to rule. But without at least some rationality on the part of the labouring class neither of those can come into being. If, on the other hand, too much faith is placed in the rationality and the moral qualities of the Producers, Plato's political argument is seriously undermined. Since rationality and virtue—the two being inextricably linked²³—constitute the fundamental attributes which legitimise political authority in the *Republic*, the greater the extent to which the Producers 'possess' those attributes, the greater the potentiality of their laying a claim to power becomes.²⁴ Plato's presentation of justice is a good example of this. Like temperance, justice is a relationship between classes, but not a property of all three classes. If the latter was the case, and, given that justice is the central virtue which brings into being and preserves the other virtues (433b), the Producers would be put on an ethical stance high enough to enable them to make a claim to power. They would have no technical claim, since politics demands expertise and they lack wisdom; but they would have a strong moral claim in that they would 'own' the principal virtue, justice. So, on the one hand, Plato blocks this moral claim by refusing to call them just. But, on the other, if the state is to be based on consent and not on sheer force, the Producers have to be somehow part of the justice of the state. By putting forward justice and temperance as relations between classes, Plato attempts to achieve both objectives.

The assertion that Plato does not attribute any sort of virtue to the Producers is decisively supported by two subsequent passages in the *Republic*. The first is 495b–e. Here Plato declares that when philosophy is abandoned by 'its true lovers', it is taken over by 'a whole crowd of squatters [who] sally out from the meaner trades', because philosophy 'still retains a far higher reputation than other occupations, a reputation that these stunted natures being as cramped and crushed by their mechanical lives as their bodies are deformed by manual trades'. What the philosopher declares here, and in the most unmistakable language, is that philosophy (i.e. the intellectual activity on which the full virtue of the Guardians is absolutely dependent) is not appropriate for anybody involved in manual labour, because such people have by nature a fundamental moral deficiency. This passage not only denies manual workers the full virtue of the Guardians, but goes further in refusing to allow them even the partial virtue that a superficial reading of 431a ff. might suggest. The definition of temperance in both the state (432a) and the individual (442c–d) involves a harmonious agreement between their respective three elements. It is evident that a deformed and amputated soul cannot be expected to achieve this type of agreement. Given that the typical social property of the Producers is that they engage in manual activities, it becomes clear that the deformity of their souls precludes the possibility that they could ever achieve even a single virtue like temperance.²⁵ Moreover, if one accepted that Plato attributes temperance to all



the Producers individually, one would in all probability have to allow for the Producers to 'possess' justice as well, since this virtue is defined in terms remarkably similar to temperance and it is the second virtue which depends on the relationship between the classes. But it is absurd to suggest that a deformed soul can achieve justice, the highest virtue of the *Republic* and the one which brings about and preserves all the others (433b). Consequently, 495b–e has to be accepted as indubitably ruling out the possibility of the Producers individually possessing either justice or temperance.

The second passage which fortifies the conclusion that the Producers are credited with no virtue in the *Republic* is 590c, where Socrates asks '[a]nd why do we despise manual work as vulgar?' and goes on to answer his own question: '[i]sn't it because it indicates a certain weakness in our higher nature, which is unable to control the animal part of us, and can only serve and learn how to pander it?' This passage has striking similarities with 495b–e: it connects virtue (or rather the lack of it) with manual labour and it asserts that the incompatibility of the two is founded on nature. The difference between them is that in 590c Plato makes a reference to the rational and the desiring parts of the soul and, therefore, this passage explicitly falls within the framework of his psychological scheme. The typical psychological characteristic of the Producers, Plato asserts, is that they are dominated by the lowest part of their soul, that they are incapable of controlling their appetite. But in a philosophical work where virtue is defined as the domination of the better elements of oneself over the worse,²⁶ domination by one's animal desires and virtue can only be mutually exclusive. It is therefore obvious that the characterisation of the Producers by the domination of the irrational part in their souls irrevocably rules out any suggestion that they might possess any individual virtue.

Furthermore, it is the Producers' lack of virtue which sanctions the possible use of repressive measures against them. Plato's definition of temperance in the city represents his attempt to achieve rule by consent. Despite the incompatibility of coercion and the ideal character of his state, however, Plato is explicit on the question of force. When he discusses the relationship between appetite (the dominant element in the souls of the Producers), spirit (which characterises the Auxiliaries) and reason (which typifies the Guardians) Plato's language leaves little doubt about what means will be employed to control the desiring part of the soul: it is full of military analogies suggesting force: *polemein* (440a5), *stasiazontoin* (440b3), *symmachon* (440b3), *stasei* (440e5), *tithesthai ta opla* (440e5), *symmacho* (441e6), *katadoulosasthai* (442b1), *polemious* (442b5), *propolemoun* (442b7), *stasiazontin* (442d1).²⁷ The accumulation of such an extraordinary number of military analogies in the space of less than three Stephanus pages leaves little doubt about Plato's recommendations. Provided that the Producers accept their social role voluntarily, the use of force is unnecessary. If they do not, however (and Plato's insistence on force in the passages just mentioned demonstrates how seriously he takes this possibility), it is unreservedly sanctioned by Plato. And any remaining doubts on the issue are finally dissolved by what the philosopher states in three other passages.



The first is 414b, where he writes that part of the Auxiliaries' duties will be 'to see that friends at home shall not wish . . . to harm our state' (one should notice the euphemistic use of 'friends').

The second is 415d–e, where he declares that the Guardians should camp on a spot enabling them to 'control those within'.²⁸ The use of the verb *katechoien* here plainly reveals Plato's intentions: in this context, the verb designates the type of military occupation usually imposed on an external enemy.²⁹

Third, there is the already noted passage in 590d: 'wisdom and control should, if possible, come from within; failing that it must be imposed from without, in order that, being under the same guidance, we may all be friends and equals'. This phrase is indeed exceptional in that it refers to a friendship created by force. Occurring towards the end of Book Nine, and given that the last Book is some kind of excursus, this final acceptance of force as a legitimate means of controlling the Producers³⁰ clearly demonstrates Plato's ultimate failure to reconcile his wish for social equality³¹ and friendship with his low opinion of the moral qualities of the Producers.³²

Unlike the Producers, who have no virtue, the Guardians possess all four virtues and therefore virtue in its entirety. The virtue which typifies them is wisdom. The whole city is wise because of the wisdom of its Guardians (428d). The Guardians also possess bravery, and, despite the fact that it is the Auxiliaries' military dexterity which makes the city brave (429b ff.), the bravery of the Guardians is superior to that of the Auxiliaries because it is grounded on reason, not merely on right opinion. The Guardians are temperate *par excellence*, because they are the class in whose souls reason is dominant over the other two elements. Exactly because this part, which is concerned with 'the whole [soul]' (441e), is in command in their souls, the Guardians are also just and have the right to rule the city.

The underlying assumptions of the *Republic's* theory of virtue (though not its metaphysical justification) can be identified as Socratic. The idea that the Guardians have perfect virtue and the Producers no virtue at all squares with the Socratic belief in the unity of virtue which is forcefully expressed in the *Protagoras*. In this dialogue, the unity of virtue centres upon the idea of wisdom or knowledge. Socrates argues that knowledge is necessary and sufficient for virtue and therefore no one can willingly act wrongly, because that would be equivalent to acting against one's better judgement. It follows that one either has knowledge and thus virtue as a whole, or has no virtue at all. In the *Republic*, although the possibility of someone acting against reason's commands is now acknowledged,³³ the cardinal position of wisdom is guaranteed by the fact that Plato presents knowledge as the quality which is indispensable to the achievement of virtue. Since justice is the highest virtue which brings into existence and preserves all the others (433b) and since one cannot be truly just without knowledge of the Form of Justice, and, even further, knowledge of the Form of the Good, knowledge remains absolutely essential for full virtue. (In grounding ethical knowledge on a transcendent basis, Plato goes of course beyond Socrates, since the latter did not introduce Forms in his ethical argument. Nevertheless, Plato's metaphysical theory is



designed in such a way as to support the Socratic assertion that virtue presupposes knowledge).³⁴ The suggestion that there is one class which possesses knowledge and hence has all individual virtues and virtue as a whole and another which has no real knowledge and thus no virtue at all stems exactly from this assertion. It means that virtue is not compartmentalised so that someone might have one virtue without having all the others.³⁵

But what about the Auxiliaries? Though they definitely lack wisdom, which is the exclusive property of the Guardians, as can be safely extracted from 428c–429a, they might still ‘possess’ bravery. Plato states in 429b that the city will be brave ‘with sole reference to the part which defends it and campaigns for it’ and that the bravery or cowardice of the other classes except for the Auxiliaries are irrelevant to the city’s bravery. Given the principle that a city has a virtue when the part in it for which it is appropriate to have this virtue has it, and, moreover, given that a brave army can consist only of—at least a majority of—brave soldiers, it seems to follow that the Auxiliaries are individually brave. In this case the reciprocity and thus the unity of the virtues appears to be abandoned: the Auxiliaries have at least one virtue, bravery, while lacking at least one other, wisdom.

A detailed examination of Plato’s presentation of the Auxiliaries, however, does not confirm this picture. In fact, as the argument proceeds, Plato seems to suggest not that individual Auxiliaries are positively brave, but rather that they can be relied upon to demonstrate, even in the most adverse circumstances, courageous behaviour. This result is achieved through their education, whose

whole object was to steep them in the spirit of our laws like a dye, so that nature and nurture might combine to fix in them indelibly their convictions about what is dangerous, and about all other topics, and prevent them being washed out by those most powerful detergents, pleasure . . . and pain and fear and desire, the most effective of all. This kind of ability to retain safely in all circumstances a judgement about what is to be feared, which is correct and in accord with law, is what I propose to call courage (430a–b).

But is this correct judgement by itself sufficient for the acquisition of bravery, as this part of the text might be taken to imply? The answer is no. ‘[W]on’t those two elements [the reasoning and the *thymoeidic* parts of the soul] be the defence that mind and body have against external enemies? One of them will do the thinking, the other will fight *under the orders of its superiors* and provide the courage to carry its decisions into effect’, Plato writes in 442b. What this passage makes clear is that the Auxiliaries’ bravery, which originates in the *thymoeidic* element in their souls, will count as a virtue only if activated under proper authority. Otherwise, it is conceivable that the Auxiliaries may use their courage in the service of an evil cause, in which case it would not, of course, count as a virtue. Left to their own intellectual resources, Callipolis’ soldiers cannot be trusted to demonstrate virtuous behaviour under all circumstances. To put it another way, they are not morally autonomous. Even if they can, through their [ορθῶς ὁδῶν], correctly assess danger and stand up to it, they still need the political elucidation of the knowledgeable Guardians to tell them in what situations they ought to use their bravery. So, even if the Auxiliaries can be safely expected to



show courage under any conditions, no confidence can be placed in them as far as deciding how to employ their courage is concerned.³⁶ To give a simple example, the city will need the Auxiliaries' brave behaviour in war, but it will be the Rulers who decide whether it should wage war in the first place.

Furthermore, in the framework of Plato's epistemology, correct opinion, unlike knowledge, can never be absolutely reliable (see chapter 6). This entails that, despite Plato's definition of bravery in terms of correct opinion in 430b, consistently virtuous behaviour cannot be grounded on opinion. As the philosopher writes in 442b–c, 'we call an individual brave because of this part of him [which] has a spirit which holds fast to the orders of reason about what he ought or ought not to fear, in spite of pleasure and pain'.³⁷ This new definition of bravery, this time in the individual, effectively effaces the impression, which might have been created in 430b, that correct opinion may be sufficient for bravery.³⁸ It now becomes plain that it is reason—and thus knowledge, which corresponds to it in Plato's epistemology—which defines what is fearful and what not. Spirit and reason are also clearly distinguished in this passage, with Plato stating that spirit, the typical psychological attribute of the Auxiliaries, is impotent to bring about bravery without the contribution of reason. But reason belongs exclusively to the Guardians and this means that only the latter are brave in the full sense.³⁹ The Auxiliaries, on their part, do not unconditionally 'possess' bravery, because all the conditions necessary for really brave behaviour are not concentrated in their *thymoeidic* souls.

Unlike the Producers, however, the Auxiliaries are recognised by Plato as having a strong potentiality for virtue. Their brave behaviour, founded on correct opinion, constitutes a first stage in the moral development of the individual, which eventually leads the most talented of them to acquire full virtue. This is demonstrated by the fact that the Guardians start their careers as Auxiliaries and are initially given an education which is based on opinion (376c ff.). In spite of the vast difference between the latter and knowledge, however, the two are continuous in the epistemology of the *Republic* (see chapter 6). This entails that the Guardians start from correct opinion and proceed to acquire knowledge. The brave behaviour of the Auxiliaries, then, though it cannot be formally considered a virtue, is not completely unrelated to virtue either. It can be regarded as a first step in the process of acquiring full virtue.

The fact that the correct opinion of the Auxiliaries is connected with knowledge and reason has one crucial consequence for the political argument of the *Republic*. Though the military class lacks the perfect knowledge of the Guardians, its members are characterised by 'love of knowledge' (376b), and thus by a philosophical disposition, and their education involves the ability to recognise reason (ἐϋαίῃ, 402a2). This is of major political significance, because given the fact that the rationality of the Producers cannot be trusted and given that the Guardians have no other physical means at their disposal for controlling the Producers except for the armed force of the Auxiliaries, this force is vital for the implementation of the Guardians' political will. Therefore, the rationality of the Auxiliaries, though substantially inferior to that of the Guardians and insufficient for the achievement of virtue in



itself, is still essential for the political stability of Callipolis. It is necessary for making sure that the Auxiliaries will not disobey the Guardians or ally with the Producers against them. It is for this reason that, in his psychological scheme, Plato presents the spirited part as the 'natural ally' of reason (441a).

So far, I have argued that in the *Republic* Plato adheres to the reciprocity of the virtues, a weak form of the thesis of the unity of virtue that is. But a stronger form of this thesis is also defended in the work. In 441d–e, the philosopher states that 'each of us will be just and perform his proper function only if each part of him is performing its proper function'. This function consists in the rational part of the soul governing, the spirited part assisting it (441e) and neither the spirited nor the appetitive parts revolting against the rational part (442c–d).

Justice, then, is identified with the proper function of each part of the soul. In other words, it is identified with the right psychic order. But justice had earlier been defined as what 'makes it possible for [the other three virtues] to come into being . . . and preserves them by its continuous presence' (433b). If wisdom, bravery and temperance can only be generated and sustained by the continuous presence of justice and if justice is equated with harmonious psychic order, it follows that this psychic order becomes the common denominator of all the particular virtues and that the latter are identical in that they are features or manifestations of this harmony.⁴⁰ From this point of view, it can be asserted that the *Republic* endorses the unity of the virtues in a way which involves more than the mere reciprocity of the virtues.

In conclusion: the *Republic's* moral psychology upholds the unity of virtue. It attributes full virtue to the Guardians, a strong potentiality for virtue to the Auxiliaries and no actual virtue, not even the possibility of ever achieving virtue, to the Producers. The political consequences of this distribution are self-evident. They are discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

We are now in a position to assess some arguments that have been advanced in order to defend Plato from the charge of unhesitatingly prescribing the psychological and political suppression of the Producers. Such arguments can be roughly divided into two categories: those which use primarily psychological premises and those which use political ones. Here we shall evaluate some of the former, postponing examination of the latter until Plato's conception of democracy is explored more fully.

One scholar who attempted a defence of Plato on moral and psychological grounds was Demos. He argued that the cardinal virtues can be divided into two, one part involving virtues relating to institutions (one could say political virtues) and one involving virtues concerning the inner life of the individual (one could say private virtues).⁴¹ On the basis of this distinction, Demos argued that, whereas as citizens the people of Callipolis will perform one specific function, in their private life they will 'remain whole and self-ordering'.⁴² Wisdom is not only a prerogative of the philosopher-kings, because in the private realm everybody is a 'completely developed [person]'.⁴³



There are substantial objections which can be raised to this type of interpretation. To start with, the suggestion that somebody might have an orderly, well-balanced personality in one's private life, but be dominated by one's irrational desires in public activities is obviously a psychological implausibility. On a more formal level, the fundamental problem with Demos's thesis is that in the *Republic*, as Mulgan succinctly puts it '[t]here is no evidence for two sets of virtues; indeed, Plato clearly thinks there is only one'.⁴⁴ This objection induced Skemp to modify Demos's position. Skemp accepted that all classes share justice and temperance and conceded that 'there is one set of virtues, but their civic effect varies as between the classes'.⁴⁵ However, this is only a thinly disguised repetition of Demos's argument and amounts essentially to the same thing. Skemp does not explain how one set of virtues can produce different civic effects in different classes, and without this explanation his argument is open to the same major objections as Demos's.

A more recent attempt to show how Plato makes moral 'salvation' possible for all classes was made by Kraut.⁴⁶ Kraut draws attention to 590c, where Plato claims that manual workers are characterised by the domination of the desiring part in their souls. This is a surprising choice of text for someone who wants to defend Plato from the charge of sanctioning the oppression of the lower class, since this passage brings out most clearly the philosopher's contempt for manual work and his conception of working people as fundamentally morally deficient beings. Kraut challenges this interpretation by arguing that 'craftsmen can be trained to prefer the goals of reason to those of appetite',⁴⁷ obviously forgetting that there is not in the whole *Republic* one word about the education of the third class.⁴⁸ He points out that the citizens of Callipolis 'are tied to each other by feelings of affection',⁴⁹ ignoring that this affection might be imposed from without (590d, which is cited by Kraut),⁵⁰ in which case it is a self-defeating notion. He also claims that the Producers will benefit from the rule of the philosophers and explains this as follows: because the Producers are not 'intellectually gifted' and are therefore likely to 'develop appetitive values', 'it is . . . better for the artisan if the ruler of an ideal state interferes with his natural moral growth and inculcates values other than the ones the artisan would adopt on his own'.⁵¹ Kraut finds this intervention beneficial for the Producers, ignoring the fact that it is imposed from without and it involves a very strong element of psychological suppression. His final argument is that since an artisan can demonstrate some intelligence in learning his craft, he is not completely devoid of reason. The philosopher-ruler takes advantage of this fact and installs in the artisan's soul a rule similar (though on a lower plane) to his own.⁵² This thesis is no more tenable than the previous ones. First of all, it depends on the obvious paradox of the idea that the Producers benefit from giving away any claim to self-determination. Second, it is completely incompatible with Plato's thesis that manual work inadvertently deforms the soul (495d-e). But the main inadequacy of Kraut's position lies in the fact that he fails to realise that the need for the Producers to be morally 'saved' from without would not arise in the first place, if Plato did not hold such a low opinion of them. If the Producers were not the morally and intellectually depleted beings that Plato takes them to be, there would be no need for them to be assisted, or rather controlled, by the philosophers in their moral



development. From the moment such a need exists, they cannot be as rational as Kraut presents them to be.

Klosko has tried to meet this objection by offering a milder defence of a Producers' virtue.⁵³ He draws a distinction between instrumental and normative reason and argues that all men are rational because they all have the former.⁵⁴ Given the right education, even those people in whose souls appetite is dominant can come under what he terms a 'holistic' (i.e. caring for the whole soul, not just for a part of it) rule of reason. This leads to a more harmonious and happier life.⁵⁵

But Klosko's interpretation is as unsuccessful as Kraut's, because a number of his premises are demonstrably wrong. First of all, like Kraut, he is wrong in asserting that the Producers are given any kind of formal education. Secondly, having set up the distinction between instrumental and normative reason and having made the claim that the Producers are to some extent rational and therefore virtuous because they 'possess' the former, Klosko disregards the essential difference between the two. Instrumental reason, like Hume's 'reason', is concerned only with means. It is the sort of reason that a robber uses in planning his next attack. Therefore, in attributing this type of calculating ability to all people, Plato does not clear the ground for crediting them with any virtue.⁵⁶ He simply acknowledges an empirical psychological fact. Platonic reason proper, what Klosko terms normative reason, involves this type of reasoning, but is not typified by it. It is characterised by reason's self-motivation in setting its own aims. Only when controlled by the aims of normative reason does instrumental reason lead to virtue. So, the presence of instrumental reason in the Producers' souls does not by any means guarantee that the Guardians can inculcate in their souls a rational order. This would entail that the Producers abandon their own preferences and cease to be dominated by their instinctive desires. But it is precisely this domination which constitutes the essence of what it is to be a Producer in the *Republic's* psychological scheme.

The idea that the Producers' possession of instrumental reason can furnish the basis for a psychological transformation in them which would lead them to care for the whole soul more than they care for the gratification of their desires ought to be rejected for one more reason. To the extent that the Producers undergo this transformation, they become rational, even if only on a limited scale. Why, then, does Plato unequivocally deny them even the most elementary forms of political participation, instead of permitting them a limited political role corresponding to their limited rationality? The discrepancy between Plato's psychology and his politics becomes in this case inexplicable.

Since both the unity of virtue and the assertion that knowledge is necessary for virtue are endorsed in the *Republic*, the possibility of conquering virtue without normative reason does not exist. Given that Plato categorically denies the possibility that the Producers can ever achieve this highest type of reason, a fact acknowledged by Klosko himself,⁵⁷ it becomes plain that the ordinary citizens of Callipolis cannot achieve any type of virtue at all.⁵⁸



Endnotes

- ¹ Translation after Cornford.
- ² See Crombie, *Plato's Doctrines*, vol. 1, p. 90; Clay, 'Reading the *Republic*', p. 25; Pradeau, *Platon et la Cité*, p. 34.
- ³ The fact that in the *Republic* Plato views politics as being concerned with the elimination of conflict is demonstrated both by his repeated affirmation of the importance of political unity (e.g. 422e–423b, 465b, 545c–d, 551d) and by his definition of temperance—which has to do with the relationship between citizen classes and is therefore a political virtue *par excellence*—as agreement on the issue of who is to rule.
- ⁴ The fact that Callipolis emerges out of the inevitability of war is another strong indication that in the *Republic* Plato tries to address real-life politics and not an idealised version of it, which would be irrelevant to the reality of the fourth-century BC.
- ⁵ Craig, *The War Lover*, p. 7, rightly points out that 'in meeting this need [for guardians], there are obvious alternatives to a professional standing army. None, however, is considered'. Although in the framework of the *Republic* Plato's choice of a professional army can be justified on the basis of the specialisation principle, introduced earlier by Socrates, the fact remains that this choice is indicative of the philosopher's aristocratic inclinations. Even if exceptions to the rule were possible, in general professional armies were typical of aristocratic cities following the Spartan model, whereas democracies relied on their citizens taking up arms in case of war. Plato actually endorses the latter model for his second-best city of the *Laws*.
- ⁶ See also 431c–d, 491a–b and 503d. Annas, *Introduction*, p. 113, suggests that Plato 'commits himself without argument to the anti-democratic thesis that the citizens with the wisdom that will make it well-governed will be the smallest class in the city'. Plato would have substantiated his position, in her opinion, only if he had proved that most people—and the people who work for a living in particular—are incapable of looking beyond their private interests, towards the interest of society as a whole. Annas is certainly right in that Plato nowhere presents a specific argument in support of the claim that wisdom will belong only to a few individuals. But, on the other hand, it has to be noted that his insistence on the exclusiveness of knowledge is not an incidental characteristic of the *Republic*, briefly discussed in Book Four. It is an intrinsic part of his overall argument. It is repeated a number of times in the dialogue and it is absolutely vital for the shaping of its political theory. As for the fact that Plato does not feel the need to argue specifically for it in 428e–429a, two things can be said in his defence. First, as Annas herself points out, the thesis under discussion is pertinent to the *Republic's* psychological scheme. In 495e and in 590c Plato emphasises that manual work irrevocably and irreversibly deforms and destroys the soul. It follows that people involved in this type of labour—i.e. the majority of people—can never achieve an important form of virtue like wisdom (or, indeed, any other kind of virtue). Second, Plato has a better understanding of economic matters than he is usually credited for. Given the economic structure of the *Republic*, where the Guardians and the Auxiliaries are sustained on the labour of the Producers, the higher classes must not consist of too many members, because otherwise the economic system of the *Republic* would become too obviously dysfunctional.



⁷ In the *Republic*, Plato abandons the Craft Analogy (i.e. the idea that virtue presupposes knowledge of a kind analogous to the expertise of the craftsman). He is obliged to do so by the fact that the craftsman's knowledge belongs to the sensible world and is therefore different from the metaphysical knowledge which in the *Republic* becomes the ultimate justification of political authority. Thus, the Craft Analogy is nowhere used after the end of Book One, with one exception (488a ff.) which can be explained (see chapter 4). Nevertheless, Plato retains the anti-democratic implications of the Socratic argument by insisting that metaphysical knowledge, like the artisan's expertise, is to be found only in a small minority of people.

⁸ My translation.

⁹ Cross and Woosley, *Plato's Republic*, p. 105. The authors concede, however, that Plato's 'conclusions as to the nature of justice, although invalidly reached, might still be correct'.

¹⁰ Vlastos, 'Justice and Happiness', p. 76.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² The question whether the Platonically just individual, whose justice depends on having the right psychic order, will also necessarily be just in the common sense of the word was asked by Sachs, 'A Fallacy in Plato's *Republic*'. Sachs argues that Socrates does not prove to his interlocutors that the commonly just individual is the happiest, but only that the Platonically just individual is. Given that the former proposition is what Socrates sets out to prove, this 'fallacy of irrelevance . . . wrecks the *Republic's* main argument' (p. 35). Sachs rightly asserts that in order to connect Platonic and common justice, Plato 'must prove that the conduct of his just man also conforms to the ordinary or vulgar canons of justice' and that 'his conception of the just man applies to—is exemplified by—every man who is just according to the vulgar conception'. But, in his opinion, 'Plato met neither requirement' (p. 46). He only asserted, without argument, that his just individual would abstain from deeds commonly held to be unjust.

Apart from Vlastos's argument discussed in the text, many attempts have been made to repudiate Sachs's argument, but none has been entirely successful. Demos, 'A Fallacy in Plato's *Republic*?', pp. 52–56, suggests that Plato is not guilty, strictly speaking, of a fallacy, but he admits that there is a gap in his argument (p. 54). Even if he is technically correct, though, the essence of Sachs's position is not affected, since the question is whether there is a connection between Platonic and common justice or not, and the gap in the argument means, of course, that this connection is not established beyond doubt. Demos readily concedes this point (p. 55). Irwin, *Plato's Ethics*, p. 259, argues that the moral argument of the *Republic* invites the picture of a Platonically just individual who is concerned with the benefit of others. This provides a link between Platonic justice, which is essentially a state of the soul, and ordinary justice, which is concerned with the relationships between individuals. But Irwin agrees that Plato does not answer all the relevant questions (p. 261) and, thus, even if his argument is correct, the connection between the two types of justice is not proved beyond dispute. Smith, 'Plato's Cave', pp. 189–92, argues that Plato takes pains to establish a close relationship between the 'vulgar' and the Platonic conceptions of justice, but that he could never satisfy Sachs's demand of equivalence between the two: the conception of 'vulgar' justice is incoherent and, thus, equivalence would make the Platonic conception of justice incoherent, too. Nevertheless, if what Plato shows is that the Platonically just individual achieves happiness, and if



there is no equivalence between the two conceptions of justice, then Socrates has not proven that common justice brings happiness. In this case, Sachs's position holds.

Schipper, *Forms in Plato's Later Dialogues*, p. 113, argues that 'Thrasymachus and Socrates both refer their conception to the same kind of acts which are commonly (if only provisionally) reputed to be just' and that 'those acts not only can be, but in some cases are, shown to be those of a "Platonically just" man'. But even if both points are conceded, Sachs is not refuted, because to say that Plato expects his just individual to be just in the common sense of the term—as he evidently does—is one thing; to prove it quite another. Annas, 'Plato and Common Morality', p. 451, finds the difficulty lying not 'in any simple fallacy', but in the ambivalence of Plato's theory of justice as a whole. She agrees, however, that Sachs's assumption is not implausible (p. 450). Finally, Kraut's attempt to repudiate Sachs's argument ('Reason and Justice') is unsuccessful, because it depends on an interpretation of the *Republic's* moral psychology which, as I argue in this chapter, is untenable.

- ¹³ The assumption that Plato attributes temperance—and probably also justice—to the Producers is shared by Vlastos, 'The Evidence of Aristotle and Xenophon', pp. 88–89 and n. 30; Pradeau, *Platon et la Cité*, p. 71; Rice, *Guide*, p. 58; Mulgan, 'Individual and Collective Virtues', pp. 84–85; Kahn, 'Unity of the Virtues', p. 32; Rosen, 'Σωφροσύνη', p. 627; Boger, 'Plato and Protagoras', p. 34; Ostenfeld, 'Eudaimonia', p. 78; and Lane, 'Plato, Popper, Strauss', p. 131.
- ¹⁴ Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory*, p. 329, n. 26. See also Irwin, *Plato's Ethics*, pp. 230–31.
- ¹⁵ The use of *phauloi* here is interesting, because the word designates the low-born, as opposed to the *chrestoi*, the well-born who enjoyed social prestige (see Connor, *The New Politicians*, pp. 88–89).
- ¹⁶ Cross and Woosley, *Plato's Republic*, pp. 108–109.
- ¹⁷ Muller, *La Doctrine Platonicienne*, p. 132.
- ¹⁸ Grube's translation.
- ¹⁹ Cross and Woosley, *Plato's Republic*, p. 124.
- ²⁰ On this point I am in agreement with Moline, 'The Complexity of the Psyche', p. 24. Moline also notes Plato's use of the term *eide* when he refers to parts of the soul and suggests that the affinity between the Forms, which are also called *eide*, and the parts of the soul is that both are 'pure'. The former are pure in that they do not accept anything incompatible with themselves (for example the Form of equality can never accept inequality), the latter in that they are 'constant in their priorities' (p. 25). What Moline does not sufficiently explain, however, is how that purity is to be conceived in the case of the appetitive part, which, by his own admission, is subject to internal conflict (p. 24).
- ²¹ The beastly and irrational character of the desires of the appetitive part is repeatedly underlined throughout the *Republic* (439b–d, 442a, 590c; cf. 586a–b). In 588c, the appetitive part is likened to a 'many-headed sort of beast' and in 589b it is treated as a vegetable (the rational man acts towards it 'like a farmer, nursing and cultivating its tamer elements and preventing the wilder ones growing'). It is true that in his exposition of temperance Plato presents the desires as susceptible to rational exhortation (e.g. 432a). What he does not explain, however, is how a part which is typified by irrationality could ever come to behave rationally by itself.



²² Williams, 'City and Soul', p. 199, calls the assumption that the desiring part has a rational part of its own an 'absurdity'. For the substantial problems involved in this assumption, see also Bobonich, 'Akasia and Agency', pp. 14–17.

²³ Although Plato goes beyond Socrates in recognising non-cognitive components in virtue, he does not in essence repudiate the unity of virtue in the *Republic*. This entails that wisdom remains a *sine qua non* for virtue as a whole. See below in this chapter.

²⁴ The incompatibility of the idea that the Producers are morally autonomous with the prescription that the Guardians should exercise absolute political control in the city is pointed out by Taylor, 'Plato's Totalitarianism', p. 295:

[e]ither [the Producers] have a coherent scheme of values, and are capable of organizing their lives in the light of it, or left to themselves they are merely a prey to their uncoordinated, short-term bodily desires. In the latter case they can provide no direction to their lives, and must therefore be externally directed for their own good; but since they can make no autonomous choices at all, *a fortiori* they cannot autonomously choose to be directed by the guardians. If, on the other hand, they can direct their own lives in the light of their values, why do they need to be subject in every detail of their lives to the control of the guardians?

²⁵ One might object here that farming was not always included in the *banausic* activities (see for example Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 4.3–4 and 5.1–17) and that given that a substantial number of the Producers would have to be farmers in order to provide food for the other classes, Plato's argument about βαναυσικά does not refer to them. However, not only is there not in the *Republic* the slightest hint that Plato wants to differentiate between farmers and the rest of the Producers, but in 415a he explicitly groups them together (415a6–7). Moreover, in the *Timaeus*, Socrates starts the recapitulation of the *Republic's* political arrangements by emphasising the separation of 'the farmers and the other craftsmen from the defence forces' (17c). Therefore, the argument about the deformed souls of the manual workers covers the whole of the Producers, farmers and artisans alike.

²⁶ See 430e–431d.

²⁷ The word *polemein* and its cognates mean to fight at war; *stasis*, a politically important word, means civil war; a *symmachos* is an ally at war; *Tithesthai ta hopla* means to take up arms; finally, *katadoulosasthai*, 'to be enslaved', designates either metaphorically the loss of a city-state's political independence, or literally the selling of a defeated population. In the Greek world, either misfortune could only be the outcome of war.

²⁸ Grube's translation.

²⁹ Interestingly enough, in the *Politics* 1264a24–27 Aristotle writes that if the Guardians have common family and goods and the Producers do not, '[t]here will inevitably be two states in one, and those states will be opposed to one another—the guardians being made into something of the nature of an army of occupation and the farmers, artisans, and others being given the position of ordinary civilians'. The use of the term 'army of occupation' clearly demonstrates that Aristotle takes for granted the possibility of force being used against the Producers.



- ³⁰ Further evidence that Plato does not rule out the possibility of the Auxiliaries using force against the Producers is furnished by the summary of the main points of the *Republic* which occurs in the opening pages of the *Timaeus*: in 17d, Socrates explicitly states that 'those whose duty it was to defend the community would be its sole guardians against threats of injury, whether external or internal'.
- ³¹ Social equality does not mean for Plato that all are equal. It means that everyone gets his due. More on this issue in chapter 3.
- ³² The same conclusion is reached, on a different basis, by Williams, 'City and Soul', p. 199. Rice, 'Plato on Force', examines some of the interpretations of Plato's two definitions of temperance that have been proposed by commentators and concludes that there is a major inconsistency between Plato's psychology and his political sociology, which entails that the use of force cannot be ruled out.
- ³³ See Leontius' and Odysseus' cases (439e ff.).
- ³⁴ However, the assertion that knowledge is sufficient for virtue is now dropped, since the possibility of *akrasia* is accepted. Thus, in the *Republic's* ethical theory, temperance and, along with it, justice are also required to secure that reason will not be impeded by the other two psychic elements and that the individual will act on the basis of his or her knowledge.
- ³⁵ For an analysis of the reasons why Plato's recognition of non-cognitive components of virtue, and the consequent rejection of Socrates' denial of *akrasia*, does not lead to a rejection of the reciprocity of the virtues, see Irwin, *Plato's Ethics*, pp. 224–29; cf. also Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings*, p. 243.
- ³⁶ It is for this reason that Plato likens Callipolis' soldiers to 'well-bred watch-dog[s]' in 375a. Like watch-dogs, they are effective in their guarding duties, but they must always act on the orders of their masters.
- ³⁷ My emphasis.
- ³⁸ Kahn, who accepts that the Auxiliaries are individually brave ('Unity of the Virtues', p. 32), is perplexed by the fact that opinion is not mentioned in 442c (p. 38, n. 5). But this omission is quite deliberate on Plato's part. The philosopher wants to deny the possibility that real bravery might be grounded on opinion.
- ³⁹ Although the Auxiliaries are not completely devoid of reason (see below in this chapter), their rationality is limited. According to Gill, 'Education of Character', p. 9, their education 'involves the use of reason, but reason only in a passive and unanalytic sense'. '[A]ctive, analytic reason' remains an attribute of the Guardians.
- ⁴⁰ In this paragraph, I take the 'unity of virtue' to entail identity of reference and not identity of meaning. In other words, Socrates' position is that the different names of individual virtues refer to the same thing—the psychological state which produces virtuous actions; it is not that they mean exactly the same thing. I think that the former is the most plausible way to understand the unity of virtue in both the *Protagoras* and the *Republic*. To suggest that when claiming that all virtues are one, Socrates claims that the terms referring to them are synonymous would create two serious, if



not insurmountable, difficulties: first, this assumption is too obviously counter-intuitive; second, and more significantly, Socrates would then have to explain why we use many different terms to designate the same thing. But no such attempt is made in either dialogue. The case for this interpretation is convincingly argued by Penner, 'Unity of Virtue'.

⁴¹ Demos, 'Paradoxes in Plato's Doctrine', pp. 167 ff.

⁴² Ibid., p. 170.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 172.

⁴⁴ Mulgan, 'Individual and Collective Virtues', p. 85.

⁴⁵ Skemp, 'Communal and Individual Justice', p. 37.

⁴⁶ Kraut, 'Reason and Justice'.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 217.

⁴⁸ The same criticism applies to Irwin, *Plato's Ethics*, p. 221, who claims that by conditioning itself to following the orders of the rational part, the appetitive part is given 'a place in moral education'. Klosko, 'Demotike Arete', p. 375 and n. 25, argues that the Producers are given an education in the *Republic* on the basis of 415b–c, where the ascent of talented children from the third class to the other two classes is discussed and of 590c–591b, where Plato says that children are in need of moral control until they become rational themselves through education. But why is education necessary for the Guardians to identify gifted Producers' children? Surely, they can do it merely by observing their behaviour. And there is nothing in 590c–591b which obliges us to take the remarks there as covering the Producers' offspring.

The position that the Producers are not to receive any formal education going beyond training in their craft is argued for, in my opinion conclusively, by Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings*, pp. 186–90, who follows Hourani, 'Education', pp. 58–60 and Guthrie, *History*, vol. 4, p. 455 and n. 2. Reeve points out, among other things, that primary education is part of a 'unified package . . . designed to turn into guardians children who already possess the natural assets requisite in good soldier-police' (p. 186); that this education involves imitation of *kaloï kagathoi* men; but the Producers' role-model cannot be such people; it should rather be obedient hard-working labourers, of whom we hear nothing (p. 187); that, in the Phoenician myth, there would be no point in the relegated guardians' children being sent away to producers and farmers if all children received the same education (p. 187); and that not only is there not a single word in the *Republic* about the Producers' children receiving education, but that no tests are devised for children to be separated in Guardians and Producers in the same way that tests exist for Guardians to be separated from those who are to remain Auxiliaries.

But the strongest evidence for the assumption that the Producers are not to receive formal education comes from three parts of the text. In 376c, at the point of introducing his educational proposals, Socrates asks: '[b]ut how are [our Guardians] to be brought up and educated?' In 456d he asks another question: '[t]hen in our imaginary state which will produce the better men—the education which we have prescribed for the Guardians or the training [in their craft] our shoemakers get?' Finally, in 496a Plato unequivocally states that manually working people are 'unfit for education' (496a5). The distinction between Guardians and Producers made in all three of those passages is so



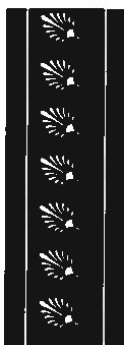
explicit that it would suffice to settle the issue even without the rest of the substantial evidence provided by Hourani (who points out the first two passages, p. 59) and Reeve (who points out the second, pp. 187–88).

- ⁴⁹ Kraut, 'Reason and Justice', p.217.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 218.
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² Ibid., p. 221.
- ⁵³ Klosko, 'Demotike Arete'.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 372.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 376.
- ⁵⁶ Irwin, *Plato's Ethics*, pp. 220–21, argues that appetite might succumb to reason for reasons of prudence, i.e. because in this way it achieves greater security for the satisfaction of its desires over time. If this happens often enough, Irwin suggests, the appetitive part might reach a point where it 'may . . . form a second-order desire to do what the rational part tells it to do' (p. 221). But if the appetitive part obeys the rational part only in order to achieve long-term efficiency in the gratification of its desires, no stable psychic—and by analogy political—order can be achieved: as Irwin admits, every time one of the appetite's immediate desires is too strong, it will be inclined to disobey. As for the suggestion of a second-order desire to follow the rational part's lead, it does not lead to a vicious regress, that is a multiplication *ad infinitum* of the parts of the soul, because Irwin takes those parts basically as agents and this means that it is the whole part that has this desire rather than a sub-part within it. The problem with this specific interpretation, however, is that a desiring part that has been conditioned to behave rationally becomes *de facto* rational itself and this position is untenable in view of Plato's overall psychological model (see n. 21).
- ⁵⁷ Klosko, 'Demotike Arete', pp. 374 and 379. Klosko accepts that the Producers' virtue will be substantially inferior to that of the Rulers.
- ⁵⁸ Klosko, 'Demotike Arete', p. 363, n. 2, in addition believes that the demotic virtue of 500d is attributed to the Producers as individuals, but this assumption receives no support from the text. The Greek reads: '[t]hen if the philosopher is compelled to try to introduce the standards which he has seen there, and weave them not into himself only, but into the habits of men both in their private and public lives, will he lack the skill to produce self-discipline and justice and all the other ordinary virtues?' All that Plato claims here is that the philosopher will be the moulder of people's habits and the 'creator' (*demiourgon*, 500d6) of temperance and justice and demotic virtue. But to shape the people's habits is not equivalent to imparting virtue in them. As we know from the *Phaedo* 82c, people can be in the habit of doing the right thing without having either philosophical knowledge or intelligence—in other words they can act virtuously without being virtuous in the proper, philosophical sense of the word. And the individual virtues that Plato mentions in 500d can—and on this occasion I believe should—be understood as virtues of the city. Nothing in this passage necessitates that this statement should be read as posing a virtue individually possessed by the Producers and the careful phrasing of the last sentence, which avoids any statement made in terms



of the virtue of the individual, is consistent with the way Plato talks about temperance in 431e ff. From this point of view, it supports rather than undermines the interpretation of the *Republic's* theory of virtue offered in this chapter.





6. Introduction to Aristotle's *Politics* Book I

Plato's model science was mathematics. Aristotle's is biology. Aristotle believes that all knowledge begins with experience and that one can arrive at universal concepts, forms, only after observing things in the material world. In other words, it is only by experiencing individual trees that one can arrive at the concept (or the form) of the tree. The form of the tree does not exist before and independently of particular trees in the sensible world.

Aristotle's interest in biology also influences his political thinking. Human beings are, in his famous phrase, 'political animals', and therefore human communities are formed according to nature and not by convention. Aristotle thinks of the Greek city-state as the highest form of community and he believes that the city has a function in the same way that an organism does. In claiming that the city is not a conventional association between individuals willingly entering into some kind of agreement, Aristotle decisively rejects social contract theories. Moreover, his analogy of the city to an organism is clearly anti-liberal.

In the first two chapters of the First Book of the *Politics*, Aristotle establishes the biological foundation of human communities and argues that the city is created from smaller political units, the household (*oikos*) and the village. But the aim of any association is human flourishing (*eudaimonia*), and this flourishing can be achieved only in the city. From this point of view, the city is logically prior to the village and the household.

As for human flourishing, Aristotle thinks that the best life is the life of the free citizen who contributes to the well-being of his city (the political life) and has the leisure to devote himself to theoretical studies (the theoretical life). Whether Aristotle thinks of the best life as comprising both the political and the theoretical life, or if he thinks of the political life as a second-best to the absolutely best theoretical life, is a difficult

question of interpretation. Nevertheless, given that the *eudaimon* citizen would probably not refuse his services to his city just to enjoy the privilege of engaging in philosophy, it is my view that the political life and the theoretical life are both components of the best life. In any case, this is a life that is possible only for a small segment of the citizen population, the leisured and well-educated aristocrats, and Aristotle, like Plato, is unapologetically antiegalitarian. Unlike Plato, however, Aristotle recognizes that there are lower forms of *eudaimonia* that are achievable by women, poorer citizens and even slaves. But, for Aristotle, none of the members of these groups could ever reach the highest form of human flourishing, the absolutely best life.





Politics

Aristotle

Translated by William Ellis, A.M.

Book I Chapter I

As we see that every city is a society, and every society is established for some good purpose; for an apparent [Bekker 1252a] good is the spring of all human actions; it is evident that this is the principle upon which they are every one founded, and this is more especially true of that which has for its object the best possible, and is itself the most excellent, and comprehends all the rest. Now this is called a city, and the society thereof a political society; for those who think that the principles of a political, a regal, a family, and a herile government are the same are mistaken, while they suppose that each of these differ in the numbers to whom their power extends, but not in their constitution: so that with them a herile government is one composed of a very few, a domestic of more, a civil and a regal of still more, as if there was no difference between a large family and a small city, or that a regal government and a political one are the same, only that in the one a single person is continually at the head of public affairs; in the other, that each member of the state has in his turn a share in the government, and is at one time a magistrate, at another a private person, according to the rules of political science. But now this is not true, as will be evident to any one who will consider this question in the most approved method. As, in an inquiry into every other subject, it is necessary to separate the different parts of which it is compounded, till we arrive at their first elements, which are the most minute parts thereof; so by the same proceeding we shall acquire a knowledge of the primary parts of a city and see wherein they differ from each other, and whether the rules of art will give us any assistance in examining into each of these things which are mentioned.

Chapter II

Now if in this particular science any one would attend to its original seeds, and their first shoot, he would then as in others have the subject perfectly before him; and perceive, in the first place, that it is requisite that those should be joined together whose species cannot exist without each other, as the male and the female, for the business of propagation; and this not through choice, but by that natural impulse which acts both upon plants and

animals also, for the purpose of their leaving behind them others like themselves. It is also from natural causes that some beings command and others obey, that each may obtain their mutual safety; for a being who is endowed with a mind capable of reflection and forethought is by nature the superior and governor, whereas he whose excellence is merely corporeal is fittest to be a slave; whence it follows that the different state of master [1252b] and slave is equally advantageous to both. But there is a natural difference between a female and a slave: for nature is not like the artists who make the Delphic swords for the use of the poor, but for every particular purpose she has her separate instruments, and thus her ends are most complete, for whatsoever is employed on one subject only, brings that one to much greater perfection than when employed on many; and yet among the barbarians, a female and a slave are upon a level in the community, the reason for which is, that amongst them there are none qualified by nature to govern, therefore their society can be nothing but between slaves of different sexes. For which reason the poets say, it is proper for the Greeks to govern the barbarians, as if a barbarian and a slave were by nature one. Now of these two societies the domestic is the first, and Hesiod is right when he says, "First a house, then a wife, then an ox for the plough," for the poor man has always an ox before a household slave. That society then which nature has established for daily support is the domestic, and those who compose it are called by Charondas *homosipuoi*, and by Epimenides the Cretan *homokapnoi*; but the society of many families, which was first instituted for their lasting, mutual advantage, is called a village, and a village is most naturally composed of the descendants of one family, whom some persons call *homogalaktes*, the children and the children's children thereof: for which reason cities were originally governed by kings, as the barbarian states now are, which are composed of those who had before submitted to kingly government; for every family is governed by the elder, as are the branches thereof, on account of their relationship thereunto, which is what Homer says, "Each one ruled his wife and child;" and in this scattered manner they formerly lived. And the opinion which universally prevails, that the gods themselves are subject to kingly government, arises from hence, that all men formerly were, and many are so now; and as they imagined themselves to be made in the likeness of the gods, so they supposed their manner of life must needs be the same. And when many villages so entirely join themselves together as in every respect to form but one society, that society is a city, and contains in itself, if I may so speak, the end and perfection of government: first founded that we might live, but continued that we may live happily. For which reason every city must be allowed to be the work of nature, if we admit that the original society between male and female is; for to this as their end all subordinate societies tend, and the end of everything is the nature of it. For what every being is in its most perfect state, that certainly is the nature of that being, whether it be a man, a horse, or a house: besides, whatsoever produces the final cause and the end which we [1253a] desire, must be best; but a government complete in itself is that final cause and what is best. Hence it is evident that a city is a natural production, and that man is naturally a political animal, and that whosoever is naturally and not accidentally unfit for society, must be either inferior or



superior to man: thus the man in Homer, who is reviled for being "without society, without law, without family." Such a one must naturally be of a quarrelsome disposition, and as solitary as the birds. The gift of speech also evidently proves that man is a more social animal than the bees, or any of the herding cattle: for nature, as we say, does nothing in vain, and man is the only animal who enjoys it. Voice indeed, as being the token of pleasure and pain, is imparted to others also, and thus much their nature is capable of, to perceive pleasure and pain, and to impart these sensations to others; but it is by speech that we are enabled to express what is useful for us, and what is hurtful, and of course what is just and what is unjust: for in this particular man differs from other animals, that he alone has a perception of good and evil, of just and unjust, and it is a participation of these common sentiments which forms a family and a city. Besides, the notion of a city naturally precedes that of a family or an individual, for the whole must necessarily be prior to the parts, for if you take away the whole man, you cannot say a foot or a hand remains, unless by equivocation, as supposing a hand of stone to be made, but that would only be a dead one; but everything is understood to be this or that by its energetic qualities and powers, so that when these no longer remain, neither can that be said to be the same, but something of the same name. That a city then precedes an individual is plain, for if an individual is not in himself sufficient to compose a perfect government, he is to a city as other parts are to a whole; but he that is incapable of society, or so complete in himself as not to want it, makes no part of a city, as a beast or a god. There is then in all persons a natural impetus to associate with each other in this manner, and he who first founded civil society was the cause of the greatest good; for as by the completion of it man is the most excellent of all living beings, so without law and justice he would be the worst of all, for nothing is so difficult to subdue as injustice in arms: but these arms man is born with, namely, prudence and valour, which he may apply to the most opposite purposes, for he who abuses them will be the most wicked, the most cruel, the most lustful, and most gluttonous being imaginable; for justice is a political virtue, by the rules of it the state is regulated, and these rules are the criterion of what is right.





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7. Introduction to Aristotle's *Politics* Book III

The fifth chapter of the Third Book of the *Politics* is crucial in that it settles the much debated question of Aristotle's attitude towards democracy. Aristotle recognizes that there is a distinct social group, the manually working potential citizens called *banausics*, who are accepted as citizens in some constitutions (the democracies), but not in others (the aristocracies). In a crucial statement, he writes that 'the best city will not make a *banausic* a citizen'. Given that, according to his own analysis, it is the inclusion or non-inclusion of this particular group into the citizen-body that defines the character of the constitution, it follows that Aristotle is not a pro-democratic thinker, as it is sometimes assumed.

In the eleventh chapter of the same book, Aristotle gives his famous 'summation argument':

it seems proper to prove, that the supreme power ought to be lodged with the many, rather than with those of the better sort, who are few; and also to explain what doubts (and probably just ones) may arise: now, though not one individual of the many may himself be fit for the supreme power, yet when these many are joined together . . . they may be better qualified for it than those; and this not separately, but as a collective body;

Prima facie, this looks like an endorsement of majority rule and, ultimately, of democracy, and it has actually been interpreted this way. Robinson, one of the experts on Aristotle's *Politics*, thinks that it 'expounds an important consideration in favor of democracy, including our kind of democracy as well as Aristotle's'. But does it?

There are a few remarks which are relevant at this point:

1. Aristotle says only that 'the many' 'may' be wiser than the few. But only the assertion that any large group is *always* wiser than a small one would signify unconditional espousal of democracy, and Aristotle never says this.
2. The 'summation argument' does not legitimize the opening of administrative positions to all citizens, as required by the ancient democracy (this crucial point is made by Keyt).
3. In the remainder of this chapter Aristotle claims that it is unsafe to give major officialdoms to 'the many', because of their axiomatic *injustice* and *folly*. But the assumption that 'the many' are by definition unjust and lack practical wisdom is completely incompatible with democratic ideology, ancient or modern.
4. Aristotle claims that the 'summation argument' remains true only if the multitude does not happen to be 'brutal' (literally, 'slavish'). By the term 'brutal' Aristotle designates the *banausics*, whose inclusion in the citizen-body was used as the criterion for distinguishing democracy from aristocracy in chapter 5. This means that when he talks about the multitude in chapter 11, Aristotle does not have in mind the wide citizenship conferred by democracy, but the much narrower citizenship which is typical of oligarchic constitutions.

For all these reasons, it can be proven, by premises that Aristotle himself postulates, that the 'summation argument' does not entail support for democracy.





Politics

Aristotle

Translated by William Ellis, A.M.

Book III Chapter V

But with respect to citizens there is a doubt remaining, whether those only are truly so who are allowed to share in the government, or whether the mechanics also are to be considered as such? for if those who are not permitted to rule are to be reckoned among them, it is impossible that the virtue of all the citizens should be the same, for these also are citizens; and if none of them are admitted to be citizens, where shall they be ranked? for they are neither [1278a] sojourners nor foreigners? or shall we say that there will no inconvenience arise from their not being citizens, as they are neither slaves nor freedmen: for this is certainly true, that all those are not citizens who are necessary to the existence of a city, as boys are not citizens in the same manner that men are, for those are perfectly so, the others under some conditions; for they are citizens, though imperfect ones: for in former times among some people the mechanics were either slaves or foreigners, for which reason many of them are so now: and indeed the best regulated states will not permit a mechanic to be a citizen; but if it be allowed them, we cannot then attribute the virtue we have described to every citizen or freeman, but to those only who are disengaged from servile offices. Now those who are employed by one person in them are slaves; those who do them for money are mechanics and hired servants: hence it is evident on the least reflection what is their situation, for what I have said is fully explained by appearances. Since the number of communities is very great, it follows necessarily that there will be many different sorts of citizens, particularly of those who are governed by others, so that in one state it may be necessary to admit mechanics and hired servants to be citizens, but in others it may be impossible; as particularly in an aristocracy, where honours are bestowed on virtue and dignity: for it is impossible for one who lives the life of a mechanic or hired servant to acquire the practice of virtue. In an oligarchy also hired servants are not admitted to be citizens; because there a man's right to bear any office is regulated by his fortune; but mechanics are, for many citizens are very rich.

There was a law at Thebes that no one could have a share in the government till he had been ten years out of trade. In many states the law invites strangers to accept the freedom of the city; and in some democracies the son of a free-woman is himself free. The same

is also observed in many others with respect to natural children; but it is through want of citizens regularly born that they admit such: for these laws are always made in consequence of a scarcity of inhabitants; so, as their numbers increase, they first deprive the children of a male or female slave of this privilege, next the child of a free-woman, and last of all they will admit none but those whose fathers and mothers were both free.

That there are many sorts of citizens, and that he may be said to be as completely who shares the honours of the state, is evident from what has been already said. Thus Achilles, in Homer, complains of Agamemnon's treating him like an unhonoured stranger; for a stranger or sojourner is one who does not partake of the honours of the state: and whenever the right to the freedom of the city is kept obscure, it is for the sake of the inhabitants. [1278b] From what has been said it is plain whether the virtue of a good man and an excellent citizen is the same or different: and we find that in some states it is the same, in others not; and also that this is not true of each citizen, but of those only who take the lead, or are capable of taking the lead, in public affairs, either alone or in conjunction with others.

Book III Chapter XI

Other particulars we will consider separately; but it seems proper to prove, that the supreme power ought to be lodged with the many, rather than with those of the better sort, who are few; and also to explain what doubts (and probably just ones) may arise: now, though not one individual of the many may himself be fit for the supreme power, yet when these many are joined together, it does not follow but they may be better qualified for it than those; and this not separately, but as a collective body; as the public suppers exceed those which are given at one person's private expense: for, as they are many, each person brings in his share of virtue and wisdom; and thus, coming together, they are like one man made up of a multitude, with many feet, many hands, and many intelligences: thus is it with respect to the manners and understandings of the multitude taken together; for which reason the public are the best judges of music and poetry; for some understand one part, some another, and all collectively the whole; and in this particular men of consequence differ from each of the many; as they say those who are beautiful do from those who are not so, and as fine pictures excel any natural objects, by collecting the several beautiful parts which were dispersed among different originals into one, although the separate parts, as the eye or any other, might be handsomer than in the picture.

But if this distinction is to be made between every people and every general assembly, and some few men of consequence, it may be doubtful whether it is true; nay, it is clear enough that, with respect to a few, it is not; since the same conclusion might be applied even to brutes: and indeed wherein do some men differ from brutes? Not but that nothing prevents what I have said being true of the people in some states. The doubt then which we have lately proposed, with all its consequences, may be settled in this manner; it is necessary that the freemen who compose the bulk of the people should have absolute power in



some things; but as they are neither men of property, nor act uniformly upon principles of virtue, it is not safe to trust them with the first offices in the state, both on account of their iniquity and their ignorance; from the one of which they will do what is wrong, from the other they will mistake: and yet it is dangerous to allow them no power or share in the government; for when there are many poor people who are incapable of acquiring the honours of their country, the state must necessarily have many enemies in it; let them then be permitted to vote in the public assemblies and to determine causes; for which reason Socrates, and some other legislators, gave them the power of electing the officers of the state, and also of inquiring into their conduct when they came out of office, and only prevented their being magistrates by themselves; for the multitude when they are collected together have all of them sufficient understanding for these purposes, and, mixing among those of higher rank, are serviceable to the city, as some things, which alone are improper for food, when mixed with others make the whole more wholesome than a few of them would be.

But there is a difficulty attending this form of government, for it seems, that the person who himself was capable of curing any one who was then sick, must be the best judge whom to employ as a physician; but such a one must be himself a physician; and the same holds true in every other practice and art: and as a physician ought [1282a] to give an account of his practice to a physician, so ought it to be in other arts: those whose business is physic may be divided into three sorts, the first of these is he who makes up the medicines; the second prescribes, and is to the other as the architect is to the mason; the third is he who understands the science, but never practises it: now these three distinctions may be found in those who understand all other arts; nor have we less opinion of their judgment who are only instructed in the principles of the art than of those who practise it: and with respect to elections the same method of proceeding seems right; for to elect a proper person in any science is the business of those who are skillful therein; as in geometry, of geometricians; in steering, of steersmen: but if some individuals should know something of particular arts and works, they do not know more than the professors of them: so that even upon this principle neither the election of magistrates, nor the censure of their conduct, should be entrusted to the many.

But probably all that has been here said may not be right; for, to resume the argument I lately used, if the people are not very brutal indeed, although we allow that each individual knows less of these affairs than those who have given particular attention to them, yet when they come together they will know them better, or at least not worse; besides, in some particular arts it is not the workman only who is the best judge; namely, in those the works of which are understood by those who do not profess them: thus he who builds a house is not the only judge of it, for the master of the family who inhabits it is a better; thus also a steersman is a better judge of a tiller than he who made it; and he who gives an entertainment than the cook. What has been said seems a sufficient solution of this difficulty; but there is another that follows: for it seems absurd that the power of the state should be lodged with those who are but of indifferent morals, instead of those who are of excellent



characters. Now the power of election and censure are of the utmost consequence, and this, as has been said, in some states they entrust to the people; for the general assembly is the supreme court of all, and they have a voice in this, and deliberate in all public affairs, and try all causes, without any objection to the meanness of their circumstances, and at any age: but their treasurers, generals, and other great officers of state are taken from men of great fortune and worth. This difficulty also may be solved upon the same principle; and here too they may be right, for the power is not in the man who is member of the assembly, or council, but the assembly itself, and the council, and the people, of which each individual of the whole community are the parts, I mean as senator, adviser, or judge; for which reason it is very right, that the many should have the greatest powers in their own hands; for the people, the council, and the judges are composed of them, and the property of all these collectively is more than the property of any person or a few who fill the great offices of the state: and thus I determine these points.

The first question that we stated shows plainly, that the supreme power should be lodged in laws duly made and that the magistrate or magistrates, either one or more, should be authorised to determine those cases which the laws cannot particularly speak to, as it is impossible for them, in general language, to explain themselves upon everything that may arise: but what these laws are which are established upon the best foundations has not been yet explained, but still remains a matter of some question: but the laws of every state will necessarily be like every state, either trifling or excellent, just or unjust; for it is evident, that the laws must be framed correspondent to the constitution of the government; and, if so, it is plain, that a well-formed government will have good laws, a bad one, bad ones.





8. Introduction to Saint Augustine

Saint Augustine is a Catholic theologian who played a crucial part in the formation of the doctrines of the Catholic Church. He is also an important figure in the history of Western philosophy, because of his substantial contribution to the marriage of the Judeo-Christian religious and the Greek philosophical traditions. By his death, in the mid-fifth century AD, Catholic theology and philosophy had been to a very large extent unified, and they would be hardly distinguishable for the next thousand years.

Augustine often expresses his views in polemics, and the non-systematic character of his work, as well as the diverse influences on his thought, make his interpretation an arduous task. One of the reasons that there is no text from Augustine in this book is that it is difficult to isolate one reasonably brief text that may be treated as typical of his thinking on any particular issue.

Augustine's views are shaped by his reading of the Scripture and the Greek philosophical and rationalistic tradition, in particular Neo-Platonism. He attacks, with exceptional zeal, two religious doctrines. The first is Donatism, a grass roots movement which connects the sanctity of mysteries with the moral quality of the priests who administer them and expresses a tendency to question the authority of the Church hierarchy. The second is Pelagianism. Pelagianism maintains that original sin does not absolutely condemn humans, who may still be saved, if they follow a very strict moral code. Although Divine Grace is a useful ally in leading such a life, it is not absolutely necessary for salvation. Pelagianism, at least as understood by Augustine, implies that human beings may be saved by their own efforts. This position expresses a trust in human reason and an optimism about the human condition—ultimately stemming from Greek philosophy—which Augustine finds impossible to accept. Moreover, it tends to diminish the role of the Church in the quest for salvation, since the individual can achieve exceptional moral

rectitude even without the help of the Church. Donatism is a movement of the lowest classes in North Africa, Pelagianism a current of thought popular with the Roman aristocracy. Augustine fights against both with equal tenacity.

Augustine is also famous, and rightly so, for his discussion of the problems of the human free will and the existence of evil. Both issues are closely connected with the ultimate question of salvation. The first issue, in its simplest possible form, can be formulated as follows: if God is omniscient, then he knows that I am going to be in class tomorrow morning. In what sense am I then free to go or not to go to this class? In other words, either Divine Foreknowledge is true, in which case I am not free to decide whether to go to tomorrow's class or not, or I am free to choose, but then there can be no foreknowledge of my actions. Augustine argues that foreknowledge essentially includes knowledge of the exercise of human free will: this means that God may know what I am about to do, but he does not cause me to do it. In addition, to know something in advance is not the same as to cause it. Imagine that you watch your favorite movie for the fifteenth time. You know what the protagonist will do next, but you are not the cause of his or her actions.

The question of evil is a particularly pressing one for early Christian theology. Everybody agrees that evil exists all around us. But if God created everything that exists in the world, does not this mean that he has created evil, too? But how is this possible if God is omnibenevolent? And even if he has not created it, why does he not eradicate it, since he is omnipotent? Augustine addresses the first leg of this question by using the resources of Platonic philosophy and in particular Neo-Platonism. Evil does not exist in itself, but is rather the absence of goodness. Think of Plato's famous analogy of the *Republic* Book Six. When one moves away from the sun, one encounters coldness and darkness. But it is not the sun itself which is cold and dark, it is one's distance from it which leads to these conditions. In the same way, God remains always good, but when one distances himself or herself from Him, one encounters evil. Using this Neo-Platonic notion, Augustine can explain evil without substantiating it. From a strictly philosophical point of view, evil does not exist. It is the negation of Being (which is identified with God) and therefore it is in itself not-Being, it does not exist.

On this foundation, Augustine argues that evil does not really exist in the world. Natural evils like the tsunami or an epidemic are evil only when viewed through the lens of the limited human understanding. In the wider order of things, which is known only to God, they are actually good, because they contribute to the realization of God's ultimate aims



(in his late dialogues Plato maintained that absolute goodness in the world presupposes the existence of patches of evil in it, rather than the complete absence of evil). As for human evil, individual wrongful actions, they are the manifestation of the deficiency of the human will. Attracted by material goods, the will turns away from God. But unjust actions must be understood not as an evil in themselves, but rather as a failure of the will to follow the path of God and produce goodness.

Along with this solution to the problem of evil, Augustine holds a pessimistic theory of salvation. Against the Pelagians, he claims that no salvation is possible without Divine Grace. Because of the weakness of the human will, the majority of mankind are condemned to a just damnation. In the afterlife, the majority of the damned will take back their resurrected bodies, which will be eternally tortured by flames inflicting pain to the body without destroying it. This torment is eternal, but the extent of the pain is proportional to the extent of the sins committed. The small number of people undeservedly saved by God's Grace, on the other hand, live in the constant presence of God and enjoy an incredible happiness which can hardly be imagined on the basis of our earthly experience.

